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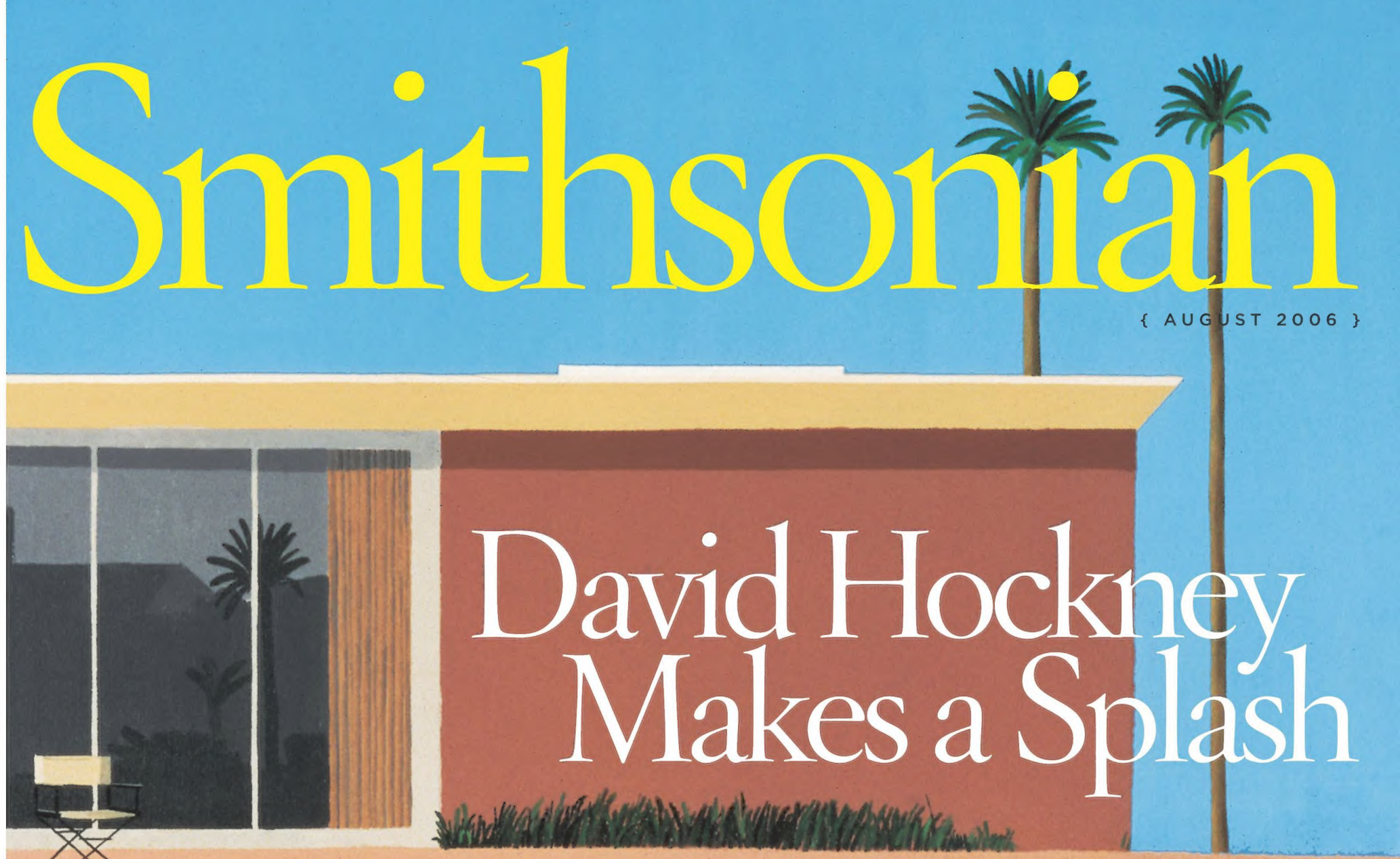
{ AUGUST 2006 }



David Hockney Makes a Splash

Focus on the Environment:
~ An Imperiled Forest
~ A "Green" Plastic
~ The Once Wild West

Photo Contest Winners

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Saved by a Pirate and Glimpsed Through a Pinhole

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FIG.

HUMAN

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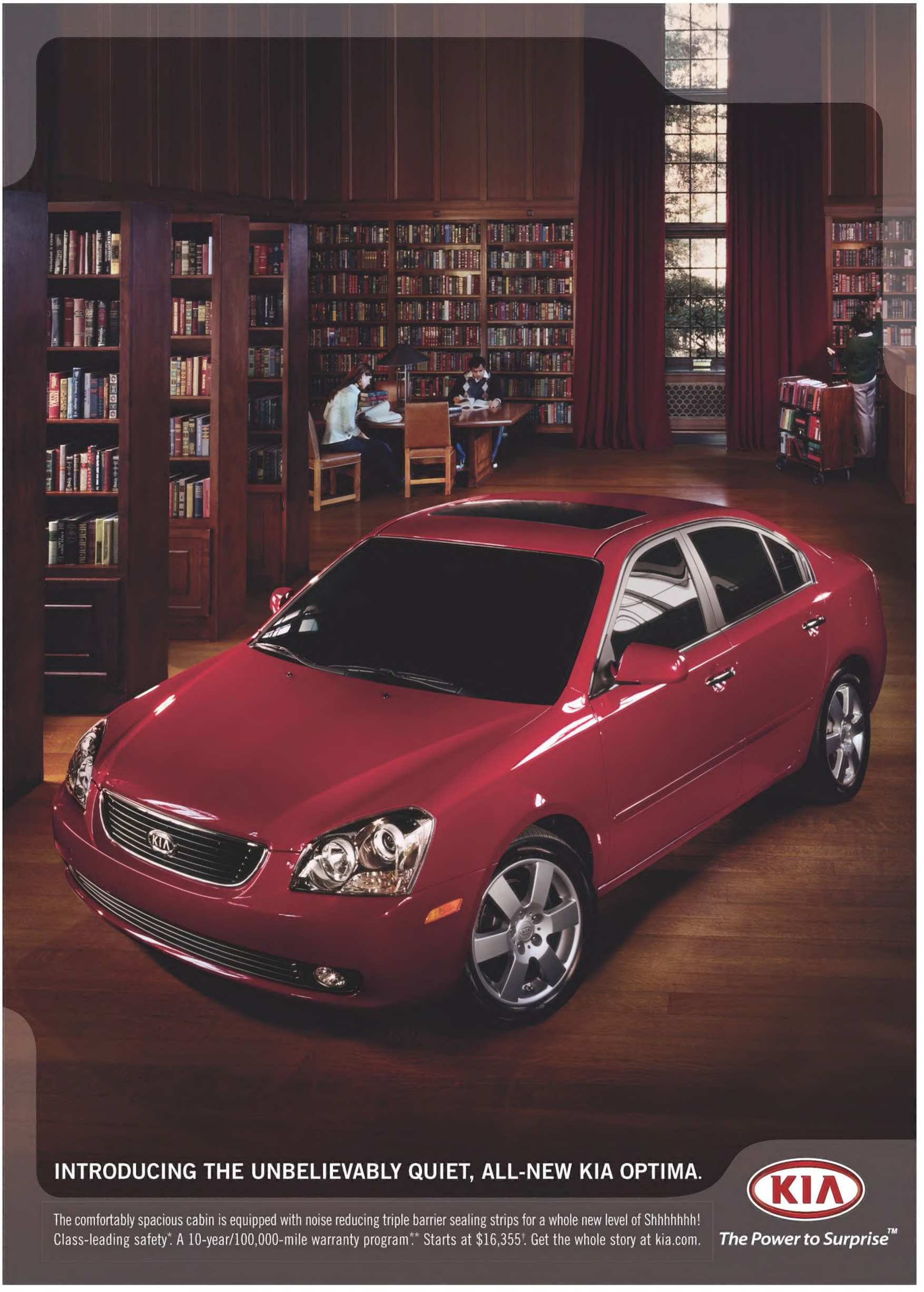

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Even though wealthy newcomers are transforming Montana, residents still buy into a mythical idea of Big Sky Country—with unfortunate consequences

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THIS PAGE: Many of the flora and fauna in the Peruvian cloud forest (a male versicolored barbet, a member of the toucan family) have yet to be cataloged. Photograph by Peter Oxford / Nature Picture Library.

COVER: David Hockney's *A Bigger Splash* (detail), 1967. © David Hockney.

The tropical Andes harbors 1,600 species of birds—double the number in Canada and the U.S. combined. **—"UPHILL BATTLE,"** PAGE 78

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KRISTINA BUCEATCHI, 26
CHISINAU, REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

PHOTOGRAPHED AUGUST 2004

During a family road trip, Buceatchi photographed her cat sitting in a bag on her lap. "The light in the cat's eyes is coming from the car's windows," she says.

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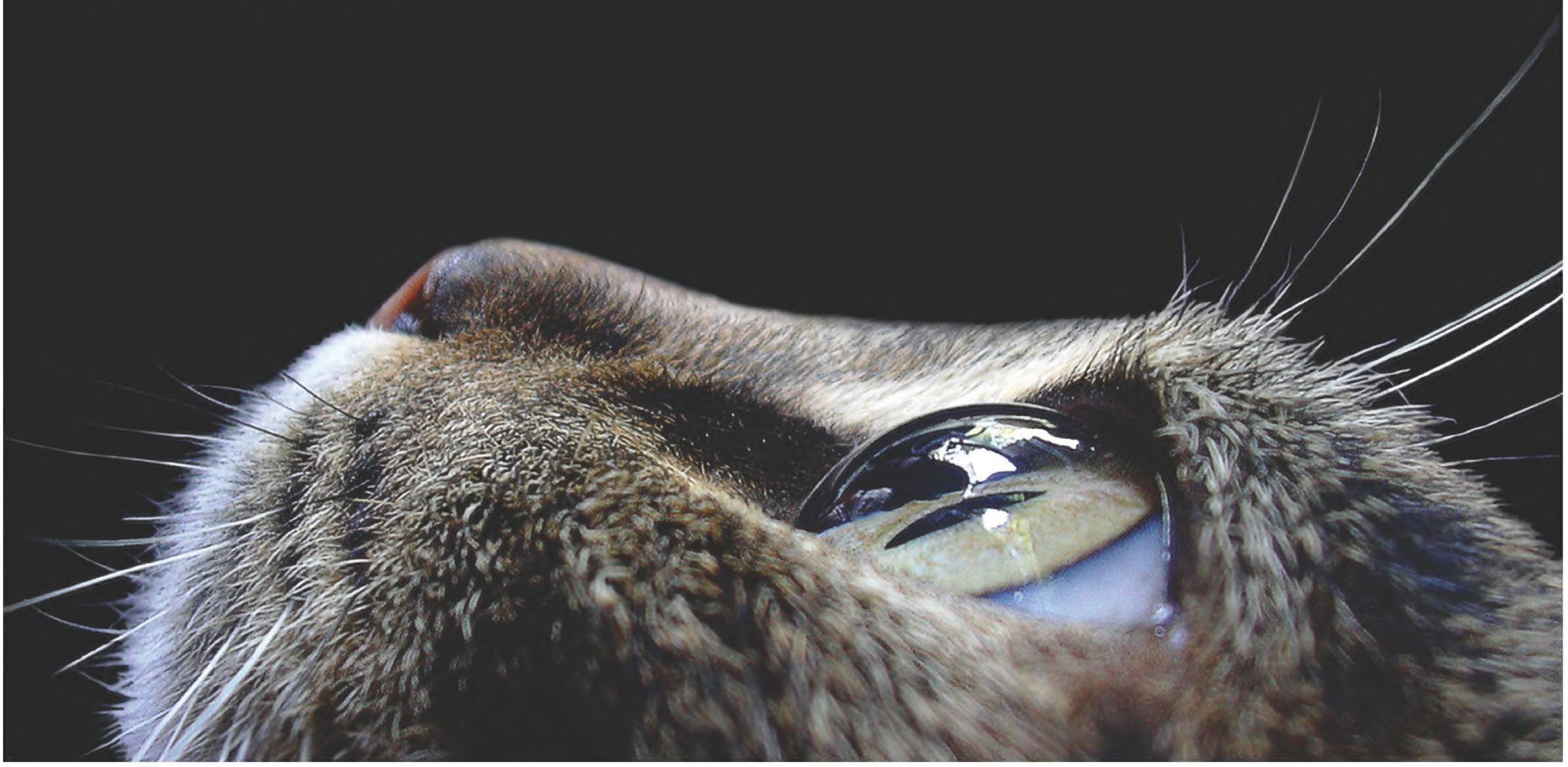

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FROM THE EDITOR

Heck of a Story

A poignant homecoming launches a harrowing quest **BY CAREY WINFREY**

ROBERT POOLE'S PIECE ("Lost Over Laos," p. 38) is about the attempt by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) to recover the remains of U.S. Air Force captain Michael J. "Bat" Masterson, who disappeared over Southeast Asia in his A-1 Skyraider plane in 1968. Poole, who is writing a book about Arlington National Cemetery, says he stumbled onto the story after attending the funeral there of some Marines killed in Vietnam in 1967. "It was a very moving ceremony, with gun salutes and flag foldings and marching platoons and the Marine Band," says Poole. "But what really bowled me over was the excruciating effort this homecoming, so many years later, represented. Hundreds of people—scientists, military, civilians—traveled halfway around the world to sift through the dirt of an old battlefield to find a few fragments of a fallen comrade. So touching, so strange, so beautiful." Poole asked to join one of the JPAC digs and was invited to accompany the team on the search for Masterson. He brought back one heck of a story.

LIKE A LOT OF PEOPLE, art critic Matthew Gurewitsch used to think of David Hockney as that transplanted (to Los Angeles) British artist who paints nice pictures in bright colors. "Because his work was so pretty and cheerful," says Gurewitsch, who wrote our cover story ("David Hockney and Friends," p. 66), "I never realized how rich it was." But when he took a closer look, Gurewitsch says he saw that Hockney's work "went far beyond the decorative. It's incredibly rich and generous and full of *joie de vivre* that I had not understood before. I think that because he is so easy to like it's difficult to really appreciate him."

It was Hockney's portraits, currently on exhibition in Los Angeles and the focus of our story, that first opened the writer's eyes. "I was looking at some of his recent work at a gallery in New York," says Gurewitsch, "and I saw some portraits, the way he could do somebody's striped shirt so easily and make it so vivid—that was hugely exciting to me."

Gurewitsch: "Because it was pretty and cheerful, I never realized how rich it was."

IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN TO OUR WEB SITE LATELY, you might want to check it out. We've got lots of new things there, including exclusive interviews and stories as well as new departments that are continuously updated: in particular "This Day in History" and our "Photo of the Day." The latter is drawn from the 7,500 entries to our Photo Contest. The winners of the contest, along with a few runners-up, are in this issue ("Snap Judgments," p. 48), but for more entries, go to Smithsonian.com.

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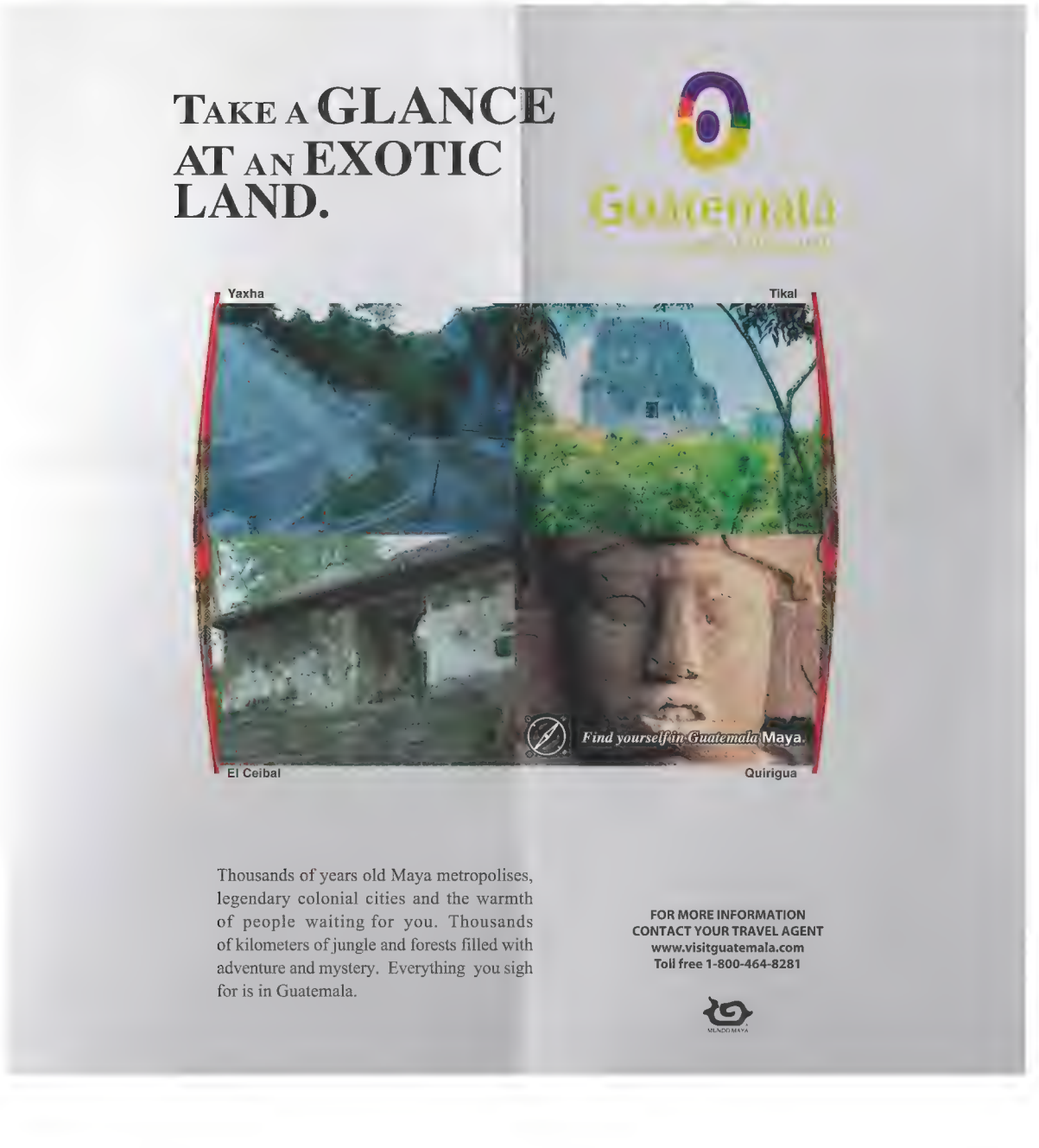
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LETTERS READERS RESPOND TO THE **JUNE** ISSUE

James Carroll's decoding of Mary Magdalene has all the elements of a good yarn: a mysterious, sexually charged figure; a reinvented legend defined and promulgated by a powerful pope; frustrated celibates and suppressed texts; and, of course, a fanatical, male-dominated church hellbent on disempowering women. Dan Brown redux!

RONALD E. PEPIN, COLCHESTER, CONNECTICUT

Carroll's "Who Was Mary Magdalene?" provoked a strong response from readers—more than 140 letters, with three complaints for every plaudit. Martin Lopez, of Miami, Florida, said the piece "did nothing but filter the spiritual wisdom and beauty of the Gospels through the polemics of modern gender politics and highly personal opinions." But the Rev. Mike Reddig, of Christ Episcopal Church in Cambridge, Maryland, said it offered the "kind of background material I often provide to others to read when they ask questions."

MARY MAGDALENE AGONISTES

JAMES CARROLL starts off well by separating the three Marys of the New Testament from the three unnamed women, but then, skating off on erotic thin ice, he epitomizes the "whole history of Western civilization" as one of "discrediting sexuality in general and disempowering women in particular." Carroll's answer to "Who Was Mary Magdalene?" conscripts and twists the history of the maturation of Christianity to fit the answer he takes from admirers of Gnostic writings. To do this, he juggles canons, invokes the "telephone game," misunderstands orthodoxy, replaces headship with power, cherry-picks data from both canonical and Gnostic documents, and omits the 1969 Roman Catholic Church adoption of the Eastern view that Mary of Bethany, Mary of Magdala and the weeping sinner are three different women. He caricatures orthodox men and slanders the Catholic Church as needing to "dominate women," inap-

propriately projecting both feminist theory and existential psychology on to people who had more pressing concerns. This article ought to have been marked fictional speculation.

RICHARD BRIGGS
BELPRE, OHIO

CARROLL BEGINS by saying, "The whole history of Western civilization is epitomized in the cult of Mary Magdalene." This claim is so extraordinary that no credible historian would ever choose to be identified with it. The next sentence is equally preposterous: "For many centuries the most obsessively revered of saints, this woman became the embodiment of Christian devotion. . . ." It would be equally difficult to find any theologian who would raise Mary Magdalene to such an exalted status. So mixed up is Carroll that he even says Christians "worship" the Blessed Virgin. An error this profound is all the more startling coming from a man who was once ordained a Catholic priest.

In Carroll's fevered imagination, Mary Magdalene has been promoted to rival—if not trump—the role of Peter. To get where he wants to go—which is to paint the Catholic Church as anti-woman—he relies on Gnostic texts, treating them as if they carried the same historical weight as the New Testament. In particular, he seeks legitimacy in two books: *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* by Susan Haskins and Karen L. King's *The Gospel of Mary Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*. The volume by Haskins was quickly dismissed by *Commonweal*, a magazine not shy about challenging the teachings of the Catholic Church. And authors like King are bent on reconstructing history to suit their politics, arguing that Pope Gregory in 591 intentionally sought to discredit Mary Magdalene because he was a sexist.

Carroll is most impressed with the "clear erotic overtones" of female anointers with loosened hair and sees "erotic energy" in biblical descriptions of women. He concludes that "what most drove the anti-sexual sexualizing of Mary Magdalene [by the Church] was the male need to dominate women." This is vintage Carroll: he sees everything the Catholic Church does through the lens of women and sexuality. It is rather amazing to see Carroll's musings printed in a serious publication like SMITHSONIAN.

WILLIAM A. DONOHUE
PRESIDENT, CATHOLIC LEAGUE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Author James Carroll responds:
Today, the historical-critical method of reading biblical texts, and thinking about the development of doctrine, is well established, but many have yet to be instructed by it. That seems to be the case with some who object to my article.

Yet readers who question my use of the word "worship" as applied to the Blessed Virgin have a point—that for Christians only God is "worshiped." Technically speaking, the tradition recognized degrees of "worship," allowing a superior form of veneration for St. Mary as Mother of God. My article is concerned with the long period during which St. Mary was often treat-

{ CONTINUED ON PAGE 99 }

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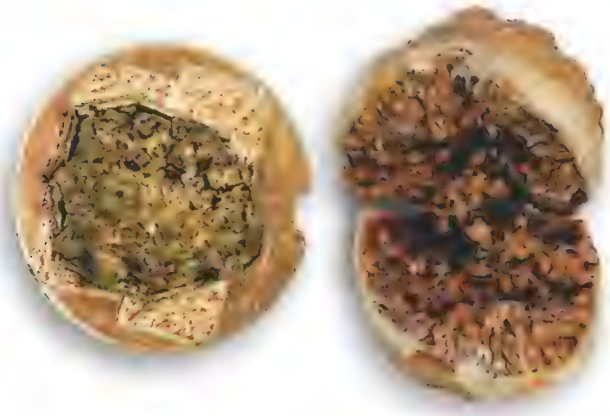
WILD THINGS

LIFE AS WE KNOW IT



FRUITS OF THEIR LABOR
A handful of 11,400-year-old dried figs have whetted the appetites of anthropologists. The figs, found in the abandoned village of Gilgal 1 in the Lower Jordan Valley in Israel, appear to be the first domesticated plants (above left, one of the ancient specimens, wrapped in gold for analysis, and a modern fig). Researchers from Harvard University and Bar-Ilan University in Israel say the figs came from an unusual variety of tree whose fruit grows sweet and soft—but happens to be sterile. Thus the people of Gilgal must have learned to cultivate new trees by planting shoots.

AN ÉTUDE FOR EGG LAYING
Some male canaries sing better than others. Now ornithologists at the Max Planck Institutes in Germany have found that female canaries that hear recordings of mating songs with complicated sequences of buzzes and trills—which scientists call "sexy syllables"—lay bigger eggs than females who hear simpler songs. Although big eggs are more taxing to produce, they tend to yield healthier offspring. So the researchers speculate that females devote more resources to reproducing when they think they're mating with the most skillful singers.

ON ITS LAST LEGS
Whales and dolphins are descended from four-legged creatures (one ancestor, left, was *Pakicetus*) that lost their hind limbs 34 million years ago. How? A new study focuses on a gene dubbed sonic hedgehog (after a video game) that guides limb formation in many species. Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine researchers and co-workers found no evidence of the gene in the vestigial hind limbs that appear briefly in dolphin embryos. Presumably, it became inactive over millions of years, explaining the shrinking hind limb in the whale family fossil record.

ANCIENT BOUQUET
A shrub from the South Pacific island of New Caledonia is the sole survivor of the oldest line of flowering plants. Now William Friedman of the University of Colorado reports that *Amborella trichopoda* makes egg cells in a way similar to that of non-flowering plants. The find may shed light on how flowers evolved, which he says remains, as Charles Darwin called it, an "abominable mystery."

Observed

NAME: *Castor canadensis*, or American beaver.
RESIDENCE: Village of the dammed.
RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE NEIGHBORS: Better than you'd expect.
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: ROBERT MAIER/ANIMALS ANIMALS; JOHN KLAUSMEYER/UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN EXHIBIT MUSEUM; CHERIE J. WESTBROOK/UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN; WILLIAM FRIEDMAN/UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO; JONATHAN REIF

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The campground was like "the site of a personal pilgrimage" for the people who gathered, says photographer Mitch Epstein.

Morning in America

Space shuttle-watchers took their places in the sun, not yet awakened to the true risks of exploring the heavens

BY HENRY ALLEN

EVEN AFTER Vietnam, Watergate, the Iran hostage crisis, the gasoline shortages and the berserk inflation eating away at their pensions, the people you see here in a Florida campground still have their faith.

This is 1983, and they're up at dawn to witness a rocket launch, the fiery space shuttle flung skyward like the torch of the Statue of Liberty itself, another proof and triumph of America.

They've driven maybe thousands of miles to nestle into the seedy ratland nowhere of Cocoa Beach, Florida—real estate so scrub-pine cheap that the campground is waterfront. The sun ricochets off the Atlantic. Mr. and Mrs. Front Porch USA are up and at 'em. "Good morning, America, how are you," as Arlo Guthrie sings it. "Don't you know me, I'm your native son." Their reveille looks oddly matter-of-fact, considering what we know now about risks and disappointments we scarcely imagined then.

Mitch Epstein, the photographer, doesn't even remember which shuttle launch it was. There were four of them that year, and what was so exciting about being in that RV park that morning was that you lived in a country where you could take space shots for granted, along with a better life for your children and a box of breakfast doughnuts sitting on top of a big white Cadillac coupe, a matter of cozy fact. As an ad for President Reagan's reelection campaign would say a year later, it was morning again in America.

"We no longer take for granted what we once did."

The people climbing on top of their campers or waving to fellow spectators or curled up like cats on the hood of a car "were not concerned with what the real vulnerabilities would be," says Epstein, 53. "It was a moment of technological wonder and extraordinary achievement. It was still coupled with the cold war and the rivalry with the Soviet Union—with the belief that we were the greatest, that we were infallible."

Epstein lives in New York and publishes books of photographs about America and Americans. He flew to Florida 23 years ago to photograph not so much the shuttle itself, but "the whole phenomenon of people driving in to watch," of people craving a moment free of doubt and full of faith. For them, this RV campsite, he says, was "the site of a personal pilgrimage." There was "a spirit of community, an excited anticipation for the event that was at hand. That's the part that speaks to me. The picture is a symbol for a kind of innocence when there was still the romance of space exploration."

"Today, people are much more self-conscious," says Epstein (below). His recent work (*Poca High School and Amos Plant, West Virginia 2004*, above) is about U.S. power.

Then, almost three years later, on the morning of January 28, 1986—the day Reagan was supposed to deliver the State of the Union Message—the shuttle *Challenger* blew up about 73 seconds into flight. No shuttle flew for more than two years. When *Discovery* went up to redeem the failure of *Challenger* on September 29, 1988, people gathered again and watched it from cars, vans and campers up and down the coast, but the flight wasn't so much a triumph as a relief. The *Challenger* disaster still haunts us, a vision of America's pride skewing off into a wild and fatal trajectory.

"We no longer take for granted what we once did," Epstein says. He doubts that he would or could take the same photograph nowadays. Time—that particular moment on that morning in 1983—is what the photograph is about. Time is one of the materials that photographers work with, the way painters work with paint. And that time is long since past and lost.

"I made a visit down there last year, and it was unrecognizable," Epstein says. "It's been condo-ized to death. It's a tourist attraction—they've Disneyfied themselves in order to attract business. It's a package, it's commercialized, it's overproduced."

In 1983, there was a subtropical fatigue about Cocoa Beach and Cape Canaveral, that Florida feeling of a place people go to lose or find themselves, it works out the same either way. Out of this tired wilderness had sprung the prophecy of the Kennedy Space Center's technological miracles.

The authenticity of that seediness is gone, Epstein says, and the miracles now are pageants of anxiety. And since the space shuttle *Columbia* disintegrated into chunks over Texas in 2003, anxiety has verged on "a collective fear."

Fear is everywhere in America, Epstein says, and it makes his kind of photography harder. In 1983, "to be a photographer in public places was much more unburdened. The camera has become much more intrusive. Today, people are much more self-conscious, suspicious of the intruder."

The photograph from the lost morning in Cocoa Beach was part of a project and book titled *Recreation: American Photographs 1973-1988*. Epstein's latest effort is "American Power," pictures dealing with energy, fuel and power conferred by everything from electricity to "the myth of our indomitability." Interesting: he photographed the same myth that morning in Cocoa Beach, too, when you think about it. He's still photographing it. Energy. Indomitability. America, how are you?

HENRY ALLEN, *a writer and editor at the* Washington Post, *won a Pulitzer Prize for his photography criticism in 2000.*

TOP: MITCH EPSTEIN / SIKKEMA JENKINS & CO.; ABE ARONOW; PP. 14,15 MITCH EPSTEIN / SIKKEMA JENKINS & CO.

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How should I take VESIcare®?
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What are the possible side effects with VESIcare®?
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Tell your doctor if you have any side effects that bother you or that do not go away.
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This leaflet summarizes the most important information about VESIcare. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about VESIcare that is written for health professionals. You can also call (800) 403-6565 toll free, or visit www.VESICARE.com.

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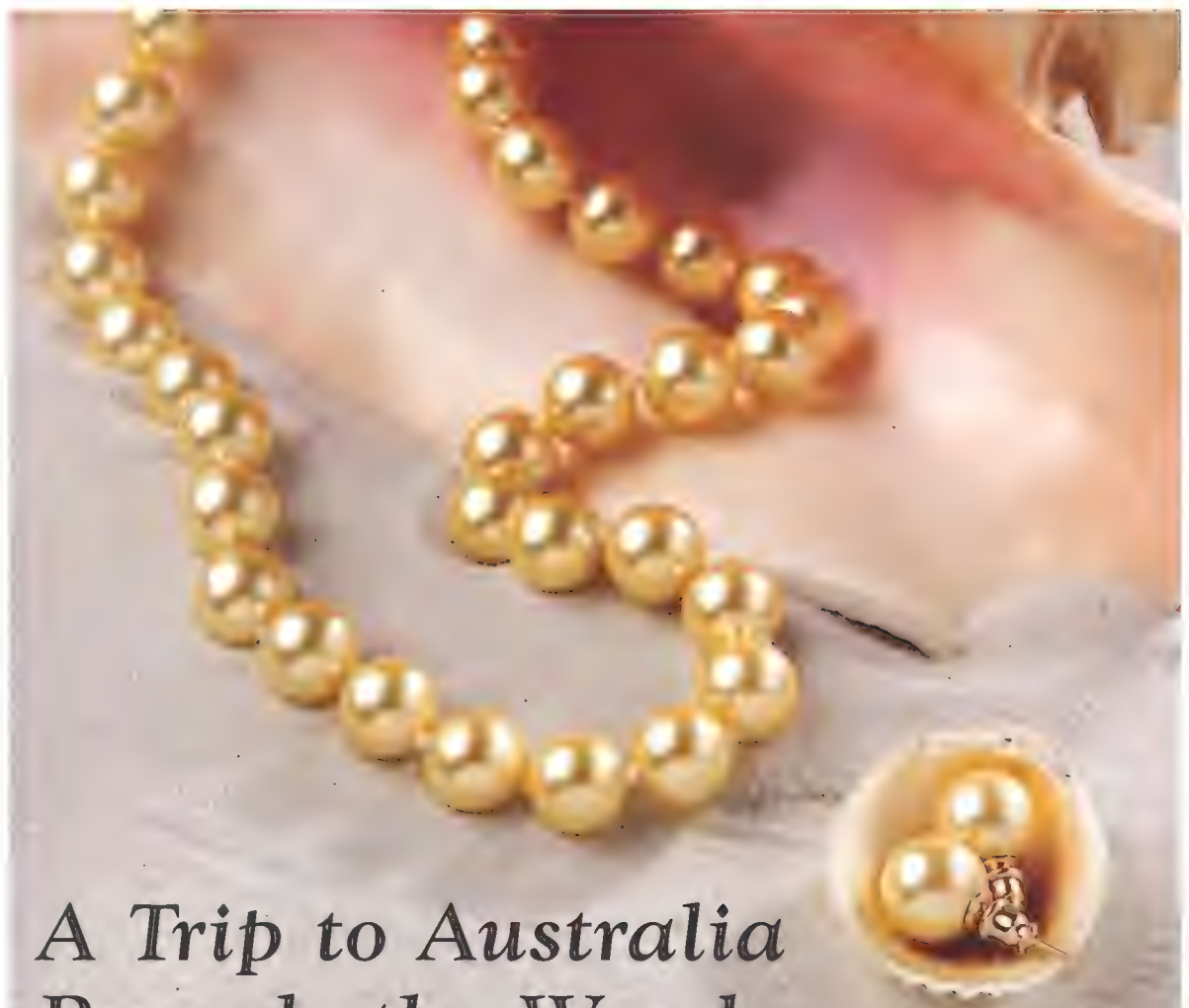

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A trip to Broome. We took the long trip to Australia to study the famous white lipped oysters that produced magnificent pearls that are often 11-14mm—about 8 times the size of a standard cultured pearl. Not only did these oysters produce the rare South Sea pearl but they also produced tremendous amounts of mother of pearl or nacre. Nacre is the lustrous iridescent substance which is secreted by the oyster to form the shiny inside of their shells. When nacre secretions are deposited around the seed they build up to form a full sized pearl. Our bioscientists went to work to see if we could help Mother Nature along a little. By extracting the seed pearl from young fresh oyster shells and speeding up the natural process by which the nacre coats the pearl, we are able to produce the breathtaking Australian Pacific Pearl.

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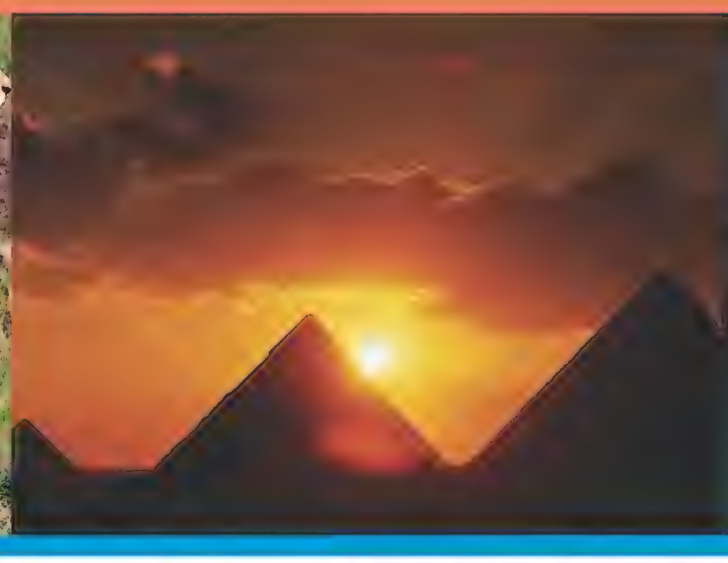
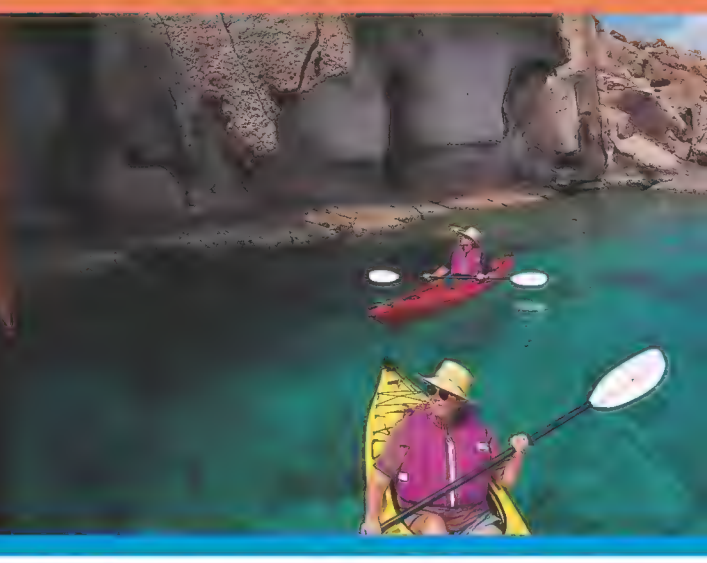

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MY KIND OF TOWN
WAHPETON, NORTH DAKOTA

"I wish all children had the freedom I did," says Erdrich (with her youngest daughter in Wahpeton). These days, she adds, both wear helmets.

A Writer's Beginnings

The well-known novelist calls growing up where she did "one of the great pieces of luck in my life" **BY LOUISE ERDRICH**

IN 1857 AN EAGER PARTY of town site speculators from St. Anthony, now a neighborhood of Minneapolis, set out for the place they believed the Northern Pacific Railway would cross the Red River, about 125 miles away. The party's first mistake was starting out in January—the coldest and snowiest in local memory. They left with five yoke of oxen, only one barrel of flour, and an 8- by 15-foot quilt of thick woolen batting that they'd all crawl beneath each night to sleep. The men took plenty of ammunition and followed two renowned métis guides, Pierre and Charles Bottineau. The snow was so deep that they had to shovel a path nearly all the way to the Red River from St. Cloud, and barely made it to their claim sites alive. Thanks to the skill of their guides in shooting a few buffalo, and by eating first the corn and cobmeal they'd brought along to feed their stock, then one by one the oxen themselves, the desperately suffering men made it through the winter to spring breakup. Not one of the party made a nickel.

One hundred forty-nine years later, the towns of Wahpeton, North Dakota, and Breckenridge, Minnesota, stand where the men nearly starved dead. Wahpeton, my hometown, is one of the great pieces of luck in my life—I've had the privilege of watching it grow and change for 51 years. When I was small, my parents taught at the Bureau of Indian Affairs School, and we lived at the edge of town. I grew up hearing the summer music of the meadowlark, rare now, and the town itself was

LAYNE KENNEDY

a green oasis. Giant elms stretched down the straight streets laid out by railroad plat. I could see down a green tunnel for over a mile, to the train depot, a graceful brick building that was dedicated to the town with great fanfare by the railroad baron J. J. Hill.

The elms died off in the late 1960s, and the lovely old depot fell into the hands of a town developer who tore it down, unappreciative of its singular history. One of the hardest things about keeping tabs on a small town is seeing the old buildings fall. St. Adalbert's Church, where I played the organ at Sunday Mass beneath a dark blue ceiling loaded with gilt stars, was sold to a contractor who demolished it. The Art Deco movie theater, where I worked as a teenager selling popcorn, was trimmed with pink-and-black lacquer and lighted with clouded glass parallelogram fixtures that spouted a softly colored light. The old theater has been a rough bar for years and sustained at least one fire. Next door there was a small café, where I waitressed. The place is stripped now of its ornate wooden booths, marble soda fountain, frosted mirrors and strange glass details into which were embedded the wings of blue morpho butterflies. The town Opera House, built in 1917, where William Jennings Bryan and Theodore Roosevelt spoke, and where the best vaudeville troupes played, was most recently a True Value hardware store. As with so many small towns throughout the country, thoughtless peripheral development, including a proposed Wal-Mart, threaten a downtown that could rival any other in the Midwest for charm.

There is more to loving a place than keeping track of its buildings, of course, but the old buildings represent the soul of a town. They are what are left of the people who endowed them, labored over them, worked and prayed and enjoyed life in them. Whenever I visit home, I can't help but think how wonderful it would be to see the town decide to save its future by saving its past—renovating the empty old banks into apartments and hotels, giving incentives to hardy downtown business owners, making downtown a priority instead of gobbling up more farmland on the outskirts.

Yet Wahpeton is a survivor, thanks to sugar beet and sunflower production, a 3M plant and the tourist attraction that is its town park. The land for Chahinkapa Park was bought and deeded to the town by Robert J. Hughes, one of many benefactors who have given Wahpeton its character. The park is a spectacular ongoing project. Where else in a town of 8,500 would one find a zoo that keeps Siberian tigers, gibbons, zebras, as well as the more familiar elk, otters and rescued but damaged raptors? The 1934 Work Projects Administration-built pool where I was a lifeguard is now a modern pool with up-to-date pumps and filters. There are acres of picnic grounds, softball and baseball diamonds, a golf course and beautifully kept playgrounds. One delightful town project, a lovingly restored indoor carousel, runs all summer long. During the flood of 1997, when the Red River crested at 54.11 feet and engulfed Grand Forks farther north, the carousel in Wahpeton was kept from destruction by a crew that included one man, Lonnie Halvorson, who stayed inside and kept pumps going day and night as the waters rose and surged against a sandbag embankment.

My family has a long history with the Wahpeton Indian School, which was run by the United States Indian Service, later the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and now is a tribally controlled school called Circle of Nations. My father taught devotedly for 30 years, inventing novel lesson plans I've kept to this day. My mother also taught there, and my sister Lise is currently the school Health Coordinator. Constructed in the earliest decade of the last century and opened in 1908, the school was created to educate Native children from surrounding reservations—mainly those in North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. My grandfather, Patrick Gourneau, a Turtle Mountain Chippewa, attended school and learned farming there in 1915, when there was a working dairy barn. Some students of the government schools, stripped of language and culture, returned to the reservations alienated from family and lost to their own elders. My grandfather did not. He became a successful truck gardener on the Turtle Mountain Reservation and served as tribal chair during one of the most difficult periods in tribal history. In the early 1950s, he helped prevent the federal government from terminating its treaty relationship with the Turtle Mountain Chippewa.

In the town cemetery, adjacent to the school, a monument of polished black stone bears the image of a beautiful young girl in a shawl. The monument to Louisa Wade-

"The town itself was a green oasis," author Erdrich recalls.

na, a White Earth Ojibway child born in 1908, who died in 1918 at the Wahpeton Indian School infirmary (possibly in the Spanish flu epidemic), is dedicated to all Indian children. This monument and cemetery ground were given to the town of Wahpeton by the children of Wahpeton Indian School, "in exchange for perpetual care, as long as the grass shall grow." South of town, in what is called the Bohemian

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Cemetery, there is a monument well known to circus people.

A broken circus tent pole, swathed in ropes and buckles, commemorates the day in 1897 when lightning shattered the shaft, killing two circus employees and knocking out many other Wahpeton residents who were, according to an article written at the time, revived by circus men who "tore shoes off those unconscious and pounded the bottoms of their feet and palms until they came to." The circus parade was still held, consisting of "205 beautiful ponies, 51 carriages, 1 calliope and 1 chime of bells." I remember other Wahpeton parades—Fourth of July, Homecoming, Sugar Beet and Sunflower Days. In many of the parades a family friend of ours rode high, resplendent in his uniform and medals. Woodrow Wilson Keeble, Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux, was a World War II and Korean War veteran. The U.S. Army Secretary has recommended that Keeble, said to be the most decorated veteran in the state, be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

I wish every child had the freedom I experienced growing up in Wahpeton. I was the proud owner of a blue Schwinn bicycle that took me to the park for swimming, tennis, bullhead fishing and girl's softball. We had a team called Radio Cab, and we wore purple T-shirts and hats with yellow lightning bolts. I could bike or walk to tiny grocery stores run out of glassed-in front porches, where cold grape Popsicles were a nickel and reaching into the cloudy freezer was a special pleasure on a hot summer day. I spent long hours at the Leach Public Library, a dignified limestone building with huge arched windows, deeded to the town by O. A. Leach, another of Wahpeton's philanthropists. The library still stands across from the Richland County Courthouse, down the street from my Catholic grade school and St. John's twin-spired Catholic church.

For generations, my family has been knitted into the fabric of Wahpeton, part of its plan even before it was homesteaded. Land for Wahpeton was originally appropriated from extinguished Indian land titles after the treaty between the Chippewa and Sioux was signed at Fort Abercrombie. In an old photograph of that gathering, my great-grandfather, then an altar boy who helped serve at an official Mass, stands next to the priest, Father Genin. I think that our family's influence on Wahpeton will continue, perhaps most important with the legacy of the bluebird houses that my father and sister sponsor and maintain out on the Circle of Nations campus. My father and mother have planted many of the town's boulevard trees. My sisters, Heid Erdrich and Lise Erdrich, write poems and stories in which Wahpeton figures too. We have recorded our own version of the town's life. As for me, so much of who I am is wrapped up in the town that it is impossible to imagine what I could have written had I not had the luck to live there and grow up aware of its dramas, riding out its wild blizzards and ducking its tornadoes, wading in the spring floods, working in its restaurants and hoeing the main crop, sugar beets, in hot sun until my shoulders blistered. I taught a number of Wahpeton's most upstanding citizens to swim, sold takeout chicken to a few who now inhabit the town cemetery, and dragged Main with kids who are the town's backbone—judges and funeral directors, police officers and state representatives. Like the hometowns of so many other writers, probably going all the way back to the beginning of literature, mine is a place that at one time I wanted to escape, but have ever after held close to my heart.

Rescuers revived the unconscious by pounding the bottoms of their feet.

LOUISE ERDRICH's *novel* The Plague of Doves *will be published in 2008.*

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THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

MOMENTOUS OR MERELY MEMORABLE

25 YEARS AGO
BOOTING UP

It isn't the first personal computer, but after the IBM PC is unveiled in August 1981, it quickly attains benchmark status. IBM outsources the operating system—to a small outfit called Microsoft—but Big Blue's name sells 240,000 PCs the first year, at $1,565 and up. PC "clones" appear in 1982; today PC descendants grab 90 percent of the home computer market.

25 YEARS AGO I WANT MY MTV

MTV debuts on cable TV August 1, 1981. Film clips of band performances introduced by video jockeys (Alan Hunter, Martha Quinn, Mark Goodman, Nina Blackwood and J. J. Jackson, above) develop into state-of-the-art tools to promote new groups and reach younger audiences. Today MTV airs in 166 countries.

160 YEARS AGO
INCREASE AND MULTIPLY

British scientist James Smithson's 1829 bequest to the United States for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge" pays off when President Polk signs an act creating the Smithsonian Institution, August 10, 1846. The first museum, in the Castle (left), opens in 1855; by 2006, 24 million annual visitors will delve into that one and 17 others, as well as a zoo and 9 research centers.

80 YEARS AGO
GOOD VIBRATIONS

Clangs fill the theater when John Barrymore and Montagu Love clash swords in *Don Juan*, the first feature film with synchronized, prerecorded sound, in August 1926. The Vitaphone soundtrack lends orchestral accompaniment as Barrymore plants a record 191 kisses on fair maidens (Jane Winton, below). A year later, recorded dialogue will make *The Jazz Singer* the first "talkie" feature.

70 YEARS AGO WINNING STREAK

After victories in the long jump and the 100- and 200-meter runs, American Jesse Owens is the first to win four gold medals in one Olympics when he and three teammates take the 400-meter relay in Berlin, August 8, 1936. "I'm all shaky," he says, but his feats dramatically rebut Adolf Hitler's idea of Aryan supremacy. Owens becomes a sports promoter, and dies in 1980 at age 66.

110 YEARS AGO
THEM THAR HILLS

Skookum Jim Mason, a Tagish Indian, discovers gold in Rabbit Creek in the Yukon on August 16, 1896, setting off the Klondike gold rush. By Christmas, 3,000 prospectors converge on the creek (renamed Bonanza) and other Klondike tributaries; in the next two years, 80,000 stampeders will haul the requisite year's worth of supplies over icy mountain trails; most find fields already staked. But gold there is: some 620,000 ounces are mined by rush's end in 1898.

{ BY ALISON McLEAN }

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: MTV (2); MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY; BETTMANN / CORBIS (2); LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; IBM CORPORATE ARCHIVES

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Find out how to improve your sleep habits at www.lunesta.com. Or call 1-800-Lunesta.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: Lunesta works quickly, and should be taken right before bed. Be sure you have at least eight hours to devote to sleep before becoming active. Until you know how you'll react to prescription Lunesta, you should not drive or operate machinery. Do not use alcohol while taking Lunesta. Most sleep medicines carry some risk of dependency. Side effects may include unpleasant taste, headache, drowsiness and dizziness. See important patient information on the next page.

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Lunesta™ (eszopiclone)℞

1, 2 AND 3 MG TABLETS

Please read this summary of information about LUNESTA before you talk to your doctor or start using LUNESTA. It is not meant to take the place of your doctor's instructions. If you have any questions about LUNESTA tablets, be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist.

LUNESTA is used to treat different types of sleep problems, such as difficulty in falling asleep, difficulty in maintaining sleep during the night, and waking up too early in the morning. Most people with insomnia have more than one of these problems. You should take LUNESTA immediately before going to bed because of the risk of falling.

LUNESTA belongs to a group of medicines known as "hypnotics" or, simply, sleep medicines. There are many different sleep medicines available to help people sleep better. Insomnia is often transient and intermittent. It usually requires treatment for only a short time, usually 7 to 10 days up to 2 weeks. If your insomnia does not improve after 7 to 10 days of treatment, see your doctor, because it may be a sign of an underlying condition. Some people have chronic sleep problems that may require more prolonged use of sleep medicine. However, you should not use these medicines for long periods without talking with your doctor about the risks and benefits of prolonged use.

Side Effects

All medicines have side effects. The most common side effects of sleep medicines are:

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Difficulty with coordination

Sleep medicines can make you sleepy during the day. How drowsy you feel depends upon how your body reacts to the medicine, which sleep medicine you are taking, and how large a dose your doctor has prescribed. Daytime drowsiness is best avoided by taking the lowest dose possible that will still help you sleep at night. Your doctor will work with you to find the dose of LUNESTA that is best for you. Some people taking LUNESTA have reported next-day sleepiness.

To manage these side effects while you are taking this medicine:

- When you first start taking LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine, until you know whether the medicine will still have some effect on you the next day, use extreme care while doing anything that requires complete alertness, such as driving a car, operating machinery, or piloting an aircraft.
- Do not drink alcohol when you are taking LUNESTA or any sleep medicine. Alcohol can increase the side effects of LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine.
- Do not take any other medicines without asking your doctor first. This includes medicines you can buy without a prescription. Some medicines can cause drowsiness and are best avoided while taking LUNESTA.
- Always take the exact dose of LUNESTA prescribed by your doctor. Never change your dose without talking to your doctor first.

Special Concerns

There are some special problems that may occur while taking sleep medicines.

Memory Problems

Sleep medicines may cause a special type of memory loss or "amnesia." When this occurs, a person may not remember what has happened for several hours after taking the medicine. This is usually not a problem since most people fall asleep after taking the medicine. Memory loss can be a problem, however, when sleep medicines are taken while traveling, such as during an airplane flight and the person wakes up before the effect of the medicine is gone. This has been called "traveler's amnesia." Memory problems have been reported rarely by patients taking LUNESTA in clinical studies. In most cases, memory problems can be avoided if you take LUNESTA only when you are able to get a full night of sleep before you need to be active again. Be sure to talk to your doctor if you think you are having memory problems.

Tolerance

When sleep medicines are used every night for more than a few weeks, they may lose their effectiveness in helping you sleep. This is known as "tolerance." Development of tolerance to LUNESTA was not observed in a clinical study of 6 months' duration. Insomnia is often transient and intermittent, and prolonged use of sleep medicines is generally not necessary. Some people, though, have chronic sleep problems that may require more prolonged use of sleep medicine. If your sleep problems continue, consult your doctor, who will determine whether other measures are needed to overcome your sleep problems.

Dependence

Sleep medicines can cause dependence in some people, especially when these medicines are used regularly for longer than a few weeks or at high doses. Dependence is the need to continue taking a medicine because stopping it is unpleasant.

When people develop dependence, stopping the medicine suddenly may cause unpleasant symptoms (see *Withdrawal* below). They may find they have to keep taking the medicine either at the prescribed dose or at increasing doses just to avoid withdrawal symptoms.

All people taking sleep medicines have some risk of becoming dependent on the medicine. However, people who have been dependent on alcohol or other drugs in the past may have a higher chance of becoming addicted to sleep medicines. This possibility must be considered before using these medicines for more than a few weeks. If you have been addicted to alcohol or drugs in the past, it is important to tell your doctor before starting LUNESTA or any sleep medicine.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal symptoms may occur when sleep medicines are stopped suddenly after being used daily for a long time. In some cases, these symptoms can occur even if the medicine has been used for only a week or two. In mild cases, withdrawal symptoms may include unpleasant feelings. In more severe cases, abdominal and muscle cramps, vomiting, sweating, shakiness, and, rarely, seizures may occur. These more severe withdrawal symptoms are very uncommon. Although withdrawal symptoms have not been observed in the relatively limited controlled trials experience with LUNESTA, there is, nevertheless, the risk of such events in association with the use of any sleep medicine.

Another problem that may occur when sleep medicines are stopped is known as "rebound insomnia." This means that a person may have more trouble sleeping the first few nights after the medicine is stopped than before starting the medicine. If you should experience rebound insomnia, do not get discouraged. This problem usually goes away on its own after 1 or 2 nights.

If you have been taking LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine for more than 1 or 2 weeks, do not stop taking it on your own. Always follow your doctor's directions.

Changes In Behavior And Thinking

Some people using sleep medicines have experienced unusual changes in their thinking and/or behavior. These effects are not common. However, they have included:

- More outgoing or aggressive behavior than normal
- Confusion
- Strange behavior
- Agitation
- Hallucinations
- Worsening of depression
- Suicidal thoughts

How often these effects occur depends on several factors, such as a person's general health, the use of other medicines, and which sleep medicine is being used. Clinical experience with LUNESTA suggests that it is rarely associated with these behavior changes.

It is also important to realize it is rarely clear whether these behavior changes are caused by the medicine, are caused by an illness, or have occurred on their own. In fact, sleep problems that do not improve may be due to illnesses that were present before the medicine was used. If you or your family notice any changes in your behavior, or if you have any unusual or disturbing thoughts, call your doctor immediately.

Pregnancy And Breastfeeding

Sleep medicines may cause sedation or other potential effects in the unborn baby when used during the last weeks of pregnancy. Be sure to tell your doctor if you are pregnant, if you are planning to become pregnant, or if you become pregnant while taking LUNESTA.

In addition, a very small amount of LUNESTA may be present in breast milk after use of the medication. The effects of very small amounts of LUNESTA on an infant are not known; therefore, as with all other prescription sleep medicines, it is recommended that you not take LUNESTA if you are breast-feeding a baby.

Safe Use Of Sleep Medicines

To ensure the safe and effective use of LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine, you should observe the following cautions:

1. LUNESTA is a prescription medicine and should be used ONLY as directed by your doctor. Follow your doctor's instructions about how to take, when to take, and how long to take LUNESTA.
2. Never use LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine for longer than directed by your doctor.
3. If you notice any unusual and/or disturbing thoughts or behavior during treatment with LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine, contact your doctor.
4. Tell your doctor about any medicines you may be taking, including medicines you may buy without a prescription and herbal preparations. You should also tell your doctor if you drink alcohol. DO NOT use alcohol while taking LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine.
5. Do not take LUNESTA unless you are able to get 8 or more hours of sleep before you must be active again.
6. Do not increase the prescribed dose of LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine unless instructed by your doctor.
7. When you first start taking LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine, until you know whether the medicine will still have some effect on you the next day, use extreme care while doing anything that requires complete alertness, such as driving a car, operating machinery, or piloting an aircraft.
8. Be aware that you may have more sleeping problems the first night or two after stopping any sleep medicine.
9. Be sure to tell your doctor if you are pregnant, if you are planning to become pregnant, if you become pregnant, or if you are breastfeeding a baby while taking LUNESTA.
10. As with all prescription medicines, never share LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine with anyone else. Always store LUNESTA or any other sleep medicine in the original container and out of reach of children.
11. Be sure to tell your doctor if you suffer from depression.
12. LUNESTA works very quickly. You should only take LUNESTA immediately before going to bed.
13. For LUNESTA to work best, you should not take it with or immediately after a high-fat, heavy meal.
14. Some people, such as older adults (i.e., ages 65 and over) and people with liver disease, should start with the lower dose (1 mg) of LUNESTA. Your doctor may choose to start therapy at 2 mg. In general, adults under age 65 should be treated with 2 or 3 mg.
15. Each tablet is a single dose; do not crush or break the tablet.

Note: This summary provides important information about LUNESTA. If you would like more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you read the Prescribing Information and then discuss it with him or her.

Rx only

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Around the Mall

SCENES AND SIGHTINGS FROM THE SMITHSONIAN MUSEUMS AND BEYOND

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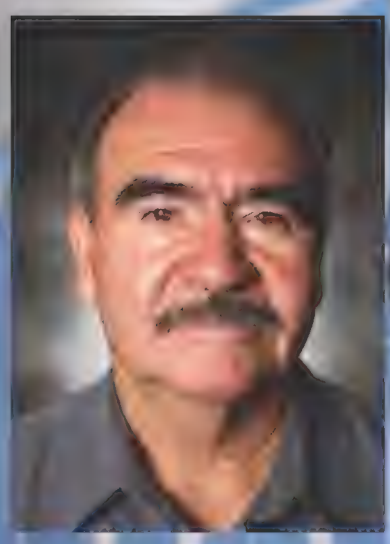
36 What's Up

For many Mexicans (Rafael Covaruvias and, inset, Nicolas Saldaña), the Bracero program meant a foothold in the United States.



WORKING MEN Nicolas Saldaña does not look like a man who cries easily. Broad-shouldered and with hands the size of baseball mitts, the 70-year-old has been selling houses in Santa Ana, California, for the past 40 years. But when Saldaña attended a meeting in

BRACEROS

{ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27 }

Leonard Nadel photographed braceros in Hildalgo, Texas, in 1956 being sprayed with DDT. The guest worker program (former braceros David Sandoval, José Gazca and Ezequiel Acavedo Perez) is back in the news as debates over immigration heat up.

downtown Los Angeles this past May to discuss the Bracero program, a federal initiative that brought Mexican workers to the United States beginning in World War II, tears bubbled from his eyes. "We came on big [cattle cars] like we were animals," he recalls. "There was hay in the corner, and we had to stand the whole time."

The National Museum of American History (NMAH) held the meeting as part of its effort to document the experiences of the four and a half million braceros—participants in the nation's first large-scale guest worker program. (It's named after the Spanish word for men who work with their arms, *brazos*.) "There's been quite a bit of work looking at policy," says curator Stephen Velasquez. "We're trying to add a social dimension, how this affected the men, the women and the communities."

Lawmakers began the program in 1942 to ease domestic labor shortages. After the war ended, the program continued to grow, even as labor groups complained that crew bosses employed the men as strikebreakers. The tide began to turn in 1961 when President Kennedy noted that braceros were "adversely affecting the wages . . . of our own agricultural workers." Congress ended the program in 1964.

Interest in bracero history has recently increased as Congress debates a new temporary worker program. But some argue that the initiative was anything but temporary. "Bracero status was a foothold in American society," says University of California at San Diego historian David Gutierrez. "Many men returned later with their families." To be sure, the program also helped California become the new garden state: vegetable production in the region jumped 50 percent in the 1950s.

NMAH's 1998 purchase of 1,700 photographs of braceros by Leonard Nadel largely inspired the project. Nadel, hired in 1956 by a spinoff of the Ford Foundation, documented everything from recruitment in rural Mexican towns to the dawn-till-dusk work of pulling sugar beets. He also captured abuses, such as housing in dirty, crowded, hastily converted barns.

After taking the train in 1958 from his hometown of Tlaltenango, Saldaña picked pears in Oregon for ten hours a day. "All day long, up and down a 15-foot ladder," he says. "We got paid by the box. I don't even remember how much." It was more than he could earn in Mexico, and he later returned to the United States to pick cotton. In 1960, he received a green card, and soon became a citizen. "I suffered too much," he says of his time as a bracero. "But I'd come again." His son, Ernesto, 36, is a community organizer in Los Angeles. "These men and women are heroes," he says. "They came during a vital period of American history and drove the economy. But they also did it for their own families. They were trying to build a better life for us." { BY ULRICH BOSER }

LEONARD NADEL / NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; GILLES MINGASSON / GETTY IMAGES (2)

Q&A

The largest retrospective of **WILLIAM WEGMAN**'s quirky art—photographs, paintings and videos—opens July 1 at the Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture. He spoke with Jennifer Drapkin about photographing his Weimaraners, including Man Ray and Fay Ray.

YOU ONCE SAID YOU FELT AS IF YOU WERE "NAILED TO THE DOG CROSS." WHAT DID YOU MEAN? In the early 1970s, in the beginning, I didn't even differentiate between working with the dog and not working with the dog. And then, after a while, I would get reviewed, and people would say, "Oh, I only want the dog pieces." And I became known in popular culture for the dog stuff, and it got to be misleading. That's not how I thought of myself—you know, the type of person who fetishizes kittens or pink or babies, who latches onto something.

SO YOU DON'T FEEL NAILED TO THE DOG CROSS ANYMORE? No. Now I see it as a wonderful thing that happened, and I am deeply entrenched in it. I feel blessed and very lucky. One year I took off working with the dog, and we were both pretty unhappy. Man Ray would slump down in my studio, knowing there would be no games for him. And the first time I started painting, Fay looked at me like, "What are you doing?" Man Ray did the same thing when he saw me driving. He looked at my foot and the wheel and couldn't figure out what was going on.

YOUR DOGS SEEM TO WANT TO BE INVOLVED. And they look great too. You always get a chance to look at them. If there were two beautiful women on the couch, and I started staring at them, one of us would start feeling uncomfortable.

AT LEAST ONE OF YOU. But the dogs don't mind.

Visit Smithsonian.com for more of the Q&A with William Wegman.

LEONARD NADEL / NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION; GILLES MINGASSON / GETTY IMAGES (3); WILLIAM WEGMAN

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FROM THE SECRETARY | Banner Renovation

The National Museum of American History will undergo a dramatic makeover

IN AUGUST 1814, after defeating American defenses in Washington and burning the White House, British forces set their sights on Baltimore. Not only was it a major port and the third largest city in the upstart republic, but Baltimore privateers had captured or sunk so many British merchant ships that the invading forces called the city a "nest of pirates." Everyone knew an attack was likely and many thought it inevitable. When the battle finally came, on September 13, a 35-year-old lawyer with a knack for poetry was watching from a ship in the harbor. Several times during the night he wondered if the city's last defense, Fort McHenry, had been overcome. But as the sun rose through the smoke of battle, Francis Scott Key saw Fort McHenry's giant American flag waving defiantly . . . victoriously. "Our flag was still there."

That flag, the Star-Spangled Banner, which inspired Key to scribble down what is now our national anthem, represents the pride, perseverance and patriotism of our nation. Now housed at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center (NMAH), it is a national icon.

That is why for nearly a century now the Smithsonian has cared for the flag, preserved it and made it available for the world to see. An extensive $18.6 million, eight-year conservation project, funded largely by Polo Ralph Lauren, was completed last year. The need for a new gallery to display this most important flag is one reason why, as part of a major transformation, NMAH will close at the end of Labor Day until the summer of 2008. Visitors will then see the Star-Spangled Banner exhibited as never before. Displays leading to it will present images, objects and sounds to convey the peril and high stakes of the battle, and the flag itself will be illuminated as if at sunrise. Inscribed on the wall behind it will be the first stanza of Key's poem.

It promises to be a stunning, emotional and inspiring experience, like the entire transformed National Museum of American History itself. We will be undertaking extensive architectural enhancements to open up NMAH, making it more engaging and easier for visitors to navigate. Workers will remove the marble panels that currently block the view to the museum's third floor. This will create an airy central core atrium with a new skylight. The atrium will serve as America's town square, a crossroads for visitors, a forum for public programs and ceremonies, a plaza for performances and special events. A grand glass staircase will connect the museum's first and second floors and allow views from one side of the building to the other. New ten-foot-high "artifact walls" on both the first and second floors will help showcase the breadth of the museum's three million objects. And new entrance vestibules and the new Ivan and Nina Selin Welcome Center will help visitors get oriented.

A new gallery (architectural rendering) will showcase the nation's most historic flag.

The first stage of the NMAH renovation will cost about $85 million, and we're grateful to Kenneth E. Behring for using part of his overall gift to the Smithsonian for that purpose. We're also grateful to Congress for its funding support.

NMAH is a temple of American memory, culture and identity—housing, as it does, the desk on which Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, the hat Abraham Lincoln wore to Ford's Theatre the night he was assassinated and the Woolworth's lunch counter from the 1960 Greensboro civil rights sit-in. Not to mention Dorothy's ruby slippers from the *Wizard of Oz*.

Fortunately, many of these treasures will be on display at the National Air and Space Museum during the renovation. We welcome you to see them there and then again in 2008 back at home, together with our most revered flag, on view as Key saw it, "by the dawn's early light."

LAWRENCE M. SMALL
SECRETARY OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Visit Smithsonian.com for more information about the renovation.

CAMERON DAVIDSON; NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY, S.I.

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THE OBJECT AT HAND | Airmail Letter

NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

STALE MAIL

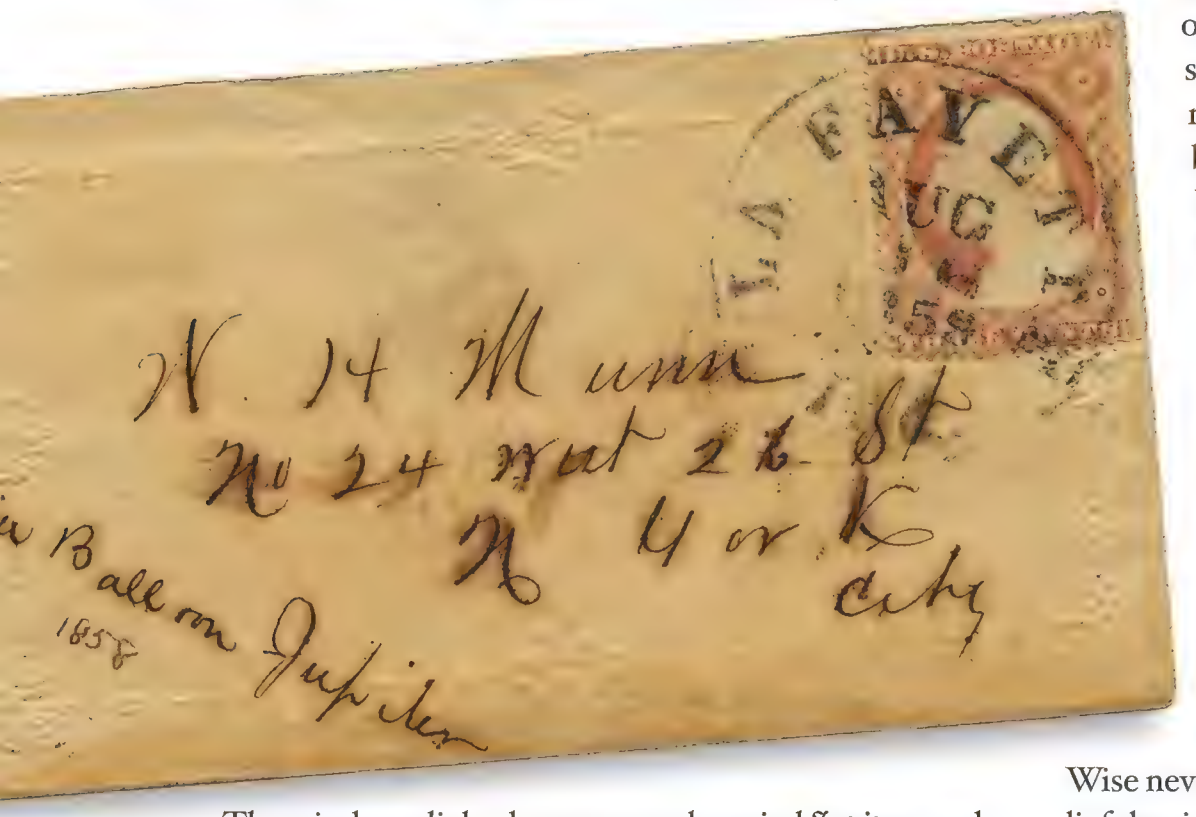
The nation's first hot-air balloon postal deliveries barely got off the ground

BY OWEN EDWARDS

IF YOU HAPPENED to be a child in the New York City of 1859, awaiting a birthday letter from, say, Aunt Isabel in Lafayette, Indiana—containing, perhaps, a shiny silver dollar—you were going to be disappointed. The mail that your aunt had expected to be unusually timely was going to be late. And what earns this delayed delivery a place in the annals of postal irony is that the letter you were anticipating was aboard America's first airmail flight.

More accurately, we should call the delivery lighter-than-air mail, since this imagined letter would have been one of 123 handed over to John Wise, aeronaut and pilot of the balloon *Jupiter*.

The postmaster of Lafayette had entrusted the 51-year-old Wise, a former builder of pianos, with a locked bag containing letters and a few circulars. Although Lafayette lay in the path of the prevailing westerlies, in the 90-degree heat of August 17, the air was still. Wise had to ascend to 14,000 feet—an astonishing altitude at the time—before he found any wind at all.



Balloon *Jupiter* (on a practice ascent in 1859, above) had to land after 30 miles; its mail (below) was sent on by train.

The wind was light, however, and carried *Jupiter* south, not east. After more than five hours aloft and with only 30 miles traveled, Wise had to descend near the town of Crawfordsville, Indiana. The *Lafayette Daily Courier* wryly dubbed the flight "trans-county-nental." After landing, Wise gave the bag of mail to a railroad postal agent, who put it on a New York-bound train.

The high hopes for this newfangled idea still resonate in the one piece of mail known to exist from that day's attempt. Today held in the collections of the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, in Washington, D.C., the letter was sent in an ornately embossed envelope, bearing a three-cent stamp, to one W H Munn, No. 24 West 26 St., N York City. To the left of the address are written the words "Via Balloon Jupiter, 1858." According to Ted Wilson, registrar of the Postal Museum, the post office required this phrase in order to place letters aboard the balloon. That the date is a year too early, and the handwriting appears different from that of the address, lend an aura of mystery.

Wilson notes that the museum purchased the letter in 1964 from a stamp dealer, adding that "It had only come to light a few years earlier." This rare find, consisting of a single page written in sepia-colored ink and signed by Mary A. Wells, is devoted mainly to the method of delivery: "Dear Sir, Thinking you would be pleased to hear of my improved health I embrace the opportunity of sending you a line in this new and novel way of sending letters in a balloon."

Wise's pluck exceeded his luck. A few weeks before his shortfall delivery of New York mail, he had made another attempt, taking off in a different balloon from St. Louis for New York City. On that flight, Wise covered 809 miles, the longest balloon journey ever made at the time, but a storm caused him to crash in Henderson, New York. Since the mail he was carrying was lost in the crash, his 30-mile August flight is the one counted as history's first airmail.

Despite the unpredictability and danger, Wise never lost his enthusiasm for balloon flight, or his belief that it was the wave of the future. During the Civil War, he flew observation balloons for the Union Army. Twenty years after his Lafayette takeoff, at the age of 71, he died in a crash into Lake Michigan.

OWEN EDWARDS, *who is based in California, is executive editor of* Edutopia, *a magazine about education.*

NATIONAL POSTAL MUSUEM, S.I. (2)

Illustration by Jon Cannell © 2006

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Xtreme Birding

The Smithsonian team (in Stone Harbor, New Jersey) spotted 178 species (a red knot, below).

HUMAN FIGURES stand still and silent beside a hilltop pasture, silhouetted against the pre-dawn light. They cup their ears as the morning's first birds start to sing. "Vesper sparrow," whispers one of the four.

"Got it," say the others.

"Pheasant," I point out.

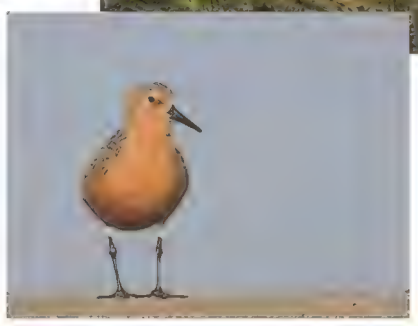
"Savannah sparrow," another whispers.

"Missed it."

"Over there, across the hilltop."

" . . . OK, got it."

Then our foursome—the Smithsonian/Bushnell Capital Kingbirds—must move on. We careen down the hill, binoculars swinging, and drive off. Many stops lie ahead in the 23rd annual World Series of Birding.



We are one of 91 teams vying in bird-watching's premier competitive event—a manic midnight to midnight race across New Jersey to find as many species as possible. This is Xtreme Birding. The National Zoo's Scott Sillett and Gregory Gough, joined by Tim Janzen, a doctor, and me, are raising funds for the Smithsonian Ornithology program, whose scientists track migratory birds, monitor populations, conserve habitat and use DNA to unravel avian evolutionary history.

On the big day, we run a 500-mile route from the state's pastoral and forested northwest corner south to Cape May, a birders' mecca. We encounter warblers, vireos and thrushes returning from the tropics. On the Delaware Bay shore, we tally the red knot, a sandpiper that eats the eggs of horseshoe crabs and times its 9,000-mile migration to coincide with the crabs' spawning. Red knot populations are plummeting these days as fishers increasingly use the crabs as bait.

The World Series of Birding, run by the New Jersey Audubon Society, promotes bird conservation for birds like the red knot. In 2006, the World Series raised $650,000 through pledges and corporate sponsorships. This year's Smithsonian team, sponsored by Bushnell Performance Optics and using loaned Land Rovers, garnered pledges of several thousand dollars.

It was not the team's best year. A wrong turn on the Garden State Parkway during an animated discussion of strategy ends with a team member asking from the back seat, "Uh, guys, why are we in New York?"

In Cape May, we see a red-headed woodpecker, a sharp-tailed sparrow, piping plovers, American oystercatchers and more. But the sun is sinking like a pair of binoculars dropped into a pond. At the finish line, our total of 178 species is 14th overall and well behind the winning Cornell University team's near-record 229 species. Still, we are undaunted and vow to return next year, much like the birds that fly thousands of miles to be there themselves. { BY JAY WITHGOTT }

Who's Counting?

14 gas pumps reside at the American History Museum. Talk about a relic! The 1932 Wayne model (right) dispensed a gallon of Red Crown for 18 cents.

LAURA PEDRICK / GETTY IMAGES; A. MORRIS / VIREO; RICHARD STRAUSS / S.I.

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What's Up

ONCE UPON A TIME

The good old days? Photos, paintings (an 1872 Winslow Homer) and more, at the Smithsonian American Art Museum until September 17, look at childhood in 19th-century America.

THANKS, MICKEY

Of the 525 items from 75 African cultures that the Walt Disney World Co. donated to the African Art Museum, 23 (a Tsogo mask) are on view through December 3.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Chinese paintings are often layered with symbolism and wordplay (right, a 20th-century scroll). "Beyond Brushwork," at the Freer until November 26, tackles these visual puzzles.

BEFORE COUNTRY WAS COOL

From 1972 to 1981, Henry Horenstein photographed country music pioneers in bars, at the Grand Old Opry and even in parking lots (below, Del McCoury). At the American History Museum until September 4.

ON PARADE

A group called the Black Mardi Gras Indians has enlivened New Orleans for a century. J. Nash Porter's photos, at the Anacostia Museum, vividly show how.

{ BY ALISON MCLEAN AND JENNIFER DRAPKIN }

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: WINSLOW HOMER, "SNAP THE WHIP," 1872 / METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK; QI BAISHI, "CHRYSANTHEMUM IN VASE" / FREER GALLERY OF ART, S.I.; J. NASH PORTER / ANACOSTIA MUSEUM, S.I.; HENRY HORENSTEIN / NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY, S.I.; NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN ART, S.I.

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Smithsonian
{ AUGUST 2006 · VOLUME 37, NUMBER 5 }

LOST OVER LAOS

Scientists and soldiers combine forensics and archaeology to search for pilot Bat Masterson, one of 88,000 Americans missing in action from recent wars

BY ROBERT M. POOLE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL HU AND CHRISTOPHE PAUL

A crater marks the spot where Capt. Michael J. "Bat" Masterson's A-1 Skyraider may have crashed in the Laotian jungle 38 years ago. Members of a Defense Department recovery team (left) search for Masterson (kneeling, second from right, below), who disappeared on a nighttime mission in 1968.

Night closed over Laos, where clouds were piling up over the rugged mountain jungle. An American pilot, on a mission to disrupt enemy traffic bound for North Vietnam, was flying into trouble. The artificial horizon on his A-1 Skyraider, a single-prop workhorse of World War II vintage, had suddenly stopped functioning, making it impossible for him to gauge his position among the clouds.

Dizzy and disoriented, Air Force Capt. Michael J. "Bat" Masterson radioed to a companion flying nearby that he was ejecting.

"I'm losing it and getting out," Masterson barked.

At this, the wingman, Air Force Maj. Peter W. Brown, began a sharp turn to avoid colliding with Masterson. Halfway through this maneuver, Brown saw an orange fireball light up the jungle. Masterson's plane was down. Brown noted the time and date—6:55 p.m., October 13, 1968. But where was Masterson?

Brown circled the crash site for more than two hours, searching for some sign of life, until his fuel gauge dipped dangerously low, forcing him to break off and return to home base in Thailand. Other aircraft took over the search at first light, scanning the site for hints of movement. There were none, just the fuselage of a Skyraider drilled into the steep mountainside, a pair of broken wings smoldering nearby, but no Bat Masterson. Had he parachuted to safety? Had he been captured by Pathet Lao troops, the Communists controlling this corner of Laos? Had he ridden his Skyraider into the ground?

Fran Masterson (wearing a red MIA bracelet, above) still hopes her husband will return some day. "I love him," she once said. "That's why I don't let go."

Those questions would remain unanswered for almost 40 years—through clandestine night raids on Laos, through days of fighting along the border with Vietnam, through the sanguinary years that finally ended the war in April 1975. A long, hard silence followed, with little contact between the United States and its former enemies who controlled the battlefields of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. The victors, more interested in rebuilding their lives than in helping Americans find lost compatriots, kept the doors closed until the scars of war began to heal. The impasse plunged more than 1,800 Americans listed as missing in Southeast Asia into a kind of limbo, like the wandering *phi pheth* ghosts of Lao tradition. Masterson—nicknamed for the frontier gambler and deputy marshal who shared his surname—became one of these missing souls, lost between the world of the living and the dead.

Meanwhile, back at home, Masterson's family held out the hope that he was still alive. Two daughters, ages 11 and 6 when their father disappeared, eventually acquired MIA bracelets engraved with his name, which they pledged to wear until his return. Masterson's wife, Fran, recalled one of her last conversations with Bat, who told her how he dreaded night missions over Laos.

After Fran got word of Masterson's crash, she flew to Southeast Asia to search for her husband while the war was still raging. After a few weeks, she returned to Upland, California, and continued to wait. She played and replayed the taped messages Bat had mailed home before his crash.

Years passed. She put the tapes away. Masterson was pro-

ROBERT M. POOLE *was executive editor of* National Geographic. *Photographer* **PAUL HU** *lives in Hong Kong. Army photographer* **CHRISTOPHE PAUL** *is based in Washington, D.C.*

MARC CAMPOS / INLAND VALLEY DAILY BULLETIN; PP. 38, 39 PAUL HU; P. 39 BOTTOM: A-1 SKYRAIDER ASSOCIATION (SKYRAIDER.ORG)

moted, in absentia, to lieutenant colonel. Hope flared when his name appeared, along with 20 others, on a list of prisoners captured in Laos and transferred to Vietnam. But the others on that list, from a 1972 report by the Defense Intelligence Agency, came home alive; Masterson, who had been included erroneously, remained at large. A decade after the 1968 crash, his status was routinely changed to missing in action, presumed dead. While many grass-roots activists believe that former enemies may still hold Americans captive, a lengthy investigation by Senators John Kerry, John McCain and others found no evidence of any POWs remaining in the region. Their 1993 report was unanimously approved by a Senate select committee.

Fran Masterson never remarried. She still dreamed about her husband, who was a boyish 31-year-old at the time of his disappearance. In those dreams he remained young, wandering the jungles just beyond reach. "Most of the time he doesn't know who I am," Fran Masterson told an interviewer in 2004. "Maybe it's the not knowing of what happened to him that makes it so hard." Frustrated by a lack of progress, she became a founding member of the National League of Families, an activist group that lobbies on behalf of missing service members, who are more numerous than one might imagine.

THE UNITED STATES counts more than 88,000 Americans as missing from its recent wars—some 78,000 from World War II; 8,100 from the Korean War; 1,805 from the Vietnam War; 126 from the cold war; one from the Gulf War of 1991; and one from the current Iraq war. About half are considered "unrecoverable," lost at sea or sequestered in sunken vessels.

But another 45,000 are thought to be recoverable, and in the years since Vietnam, military investigators, working with civilian scientists from the world's largest forensic anthropology laboratory at Hickam Air Force Base next to Honolulu, have made an arduous effort to whittle down the roster of the missing. Although focused initially on Southeast Asia, the recovery missions have circled the globe, from Tibet to Hungary to Russia and Papua New Guinea. More than 1,200 service members have been recovered and identified since 1973. Most of these—841 by the military's tally—were repatriated from battlefields in Southeast Asia; others came from North Korea, China and the scattered theaters of World War II.

A number of factors have contributed to the recent surge in recovery and identification operations. Prodding from people like Fran Masterson and other family members has created a strong political constituency for POW and MIA work, boosting the federal budget and personnel for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), the military unit charged with finding missing warriors. At the same time, advances in forensic science and DNA testing make it easier to identify a long-dead soldier or sailor on the basis of very little physical data—a bone fragment, a few teeth, a lock of hair—even in cases which have languished unsolved for decades. And, since the mid-1980s, improved relations with Vietnam and other Asian nations has meant better access for teams scouring the jungles for evidence. All of this has led to the growth, in sophistication as well as size, of the JPAC command, which employs more than 400 people and combines expertise in criminal investigation, archaeology, linguistics, bomb disposal, DNA processing and a number of other specialties for a single purpose—to account for all Americans who ever disappeared in battle.

"Nobody goes to the effort we Americans do," says Army Brig. Gen. Michael C. Flowers, commander of JPAC, headquartered at Hickam Air Force

The Vietnam War spilled into mountainous Laos, scene of heavy bombing. Masterson's crash site is identified by a red X.

Base. "From the time we go to boot camp we learn to take care of one another. And we make the promise that no one gets left behind. We will go back again and again to look for those who might still be alive or those who have fallen."

IT TOOK SOME persistence to find Bat Masterson's crash site. By the autumn of 2005, when I arrived in rural Xieng Khuang Province of Laos with an anthropologist and a recovery team of nine service members from JPAC, the United States had already spent years in delicate negotiations for access to the region. Since the war, there has been periodic unrest among the indigenous Hmong hill tribes, old allies of the French and, later, of the Americans who fought there. Central authorities in Laos, a Communist regime since 1975, were understandably touchy about opening the region. Thus it was 1993 before the first investigators were admitted to northern Laos to search for Masterson, with follow-up missions in August 2004, October 2004 and July 2005.

MIKE REAGAN

Each foray into the mountains yielded a few scraps of new evidence—a 1967 quarter from the site, which fit the time frame of Masterson's disappearance; two 20-millimeter cannons consistent with the A-1 Skyraider's armament; parts from the plane's parachute assembly; many fragments of the blue glass used exclusively in the Skyraider's canopy; and a few shards of bone thought to be human. The bone was in such small pieces and so badly burned, however, that it contained little organic material, which made it an unlikely source of DNA to link Masterson and the wreck.

But the crash site—prosaically logged in military records as Case No. 1303—was almost certainly Masterson's: it fit the coordinates noted by his comrades in 1968, and the aircraft debris made it clear that the downed plane was a Skyraider, the only one of its kind lost in this part of Laos. Although the place had been thoroughly scavenged prior to our arrival by villagers looking for scrap metal and other useful bits of hardware, members of the recovery team were optimistic that a month's excavation might finally solve the mystery of Masterson's fate.

"WE'RE JUST NOW getting into a very productive part of the dig," said Elizabeth "Zib" Martinson Goodman, the civilian anthropologist in charge of recovery operations. Goodman, an ebullient 36-year-old raised on an apple orchard in central Washington State, showed me around the site, where a swath of jungle had been peeled back, revealing a grid of four meter squares climbing down the mountainside and ending where a dense green wave of vegetation reared up at the edge.

Near the top of the cleared area was the impact crater, a black hole in the red earth. "On most archaeology sites," said Goodman, "you dig down through the topsoil, sifting for artifacts until you reach the sterile layer, the undisturbed layer of soil below the surface." On this hillside, the stratigraphy was confused. The plane punched through the sterile profile. Scavengers later excavated around the plane, tossing the dirt containing wreckage and human remains down the hill. Monsoons subsequently scattered the evidence. Any remaining artifacts would be dispersed downhill from the crater.

That is where a marine and a soldier, stripped to their T-shirts and sweating, chopped away with pickaxes at the lower edge of the clearing. Each shovel of dirt was dumped into a black plastic bucket labeled for this particular grid and conveyed up the hillside by a brigade of some 50 Hmong workers. On the brow of the hill, a score of Hmong villagers, working with Americans from the JPAC team, strained each bucket of soil through quarter-inch screens to recover the tiniest clues from the site—twisted bits of olive drab metal, mud-streaked screws and rivets, strands of insulated wire, melted gobs of plastic and the occasional stinging centipede lurking in the dirt. One afternoon, as I was sifting earth at the screening station, I uncovered a scorpion in my tray. A Buddhist co-worker walked over, calmly lifted the irate arachnid out with a trowel, set it free at the jungle's edge and blithely returned to work.

The excavation looked like textbook archaeology, laid out with pegs and strings in geometrical precision, but in other ways it was unique. "Most archaeology gets done in places where people want to live," said Goodman, "like flat places where you can walk around." As she spoke, we were listing like sailors on a heeling sailboat, straining to keep balanced on the nearly 45-degree slope. "We often wind up in places like this, where it's pretty remote and hard to maneuver, or in Papua New Guinea, where we work knee-deep in cold water and mud the whole time," she said. "Half the challenge is just getting there and being able to work." In July 2005, the previous season at Site 1303, frequent rains shut down excavations for days, and on those occasions when work was possible, the footing was treacherous. "The challenge was to get up the hill without breaking your leg," said Goodman, who had supervised the previous excavation.

Commuting by chopper, Elizabeth "Zib" Goodman directs excavations at Site 1303, where workers are hoping to solve a decades-old mystery.

SGT. CHRISTOPHE PAUL / US ARMY

Our conversation was interrupted by the crackling of a two-way radio on Goodman's hip. A disembodied voice came from the speaker: "We've got something for you."

Another radio voice answered: "Roger. I'm on it." The second voice belonged to Staff Sgt. Steve Mannon, 32, a burly

marine in wraparound shades and a dark green polo shirt, who was already scrambling downhill, where workers with picks and shovels had backed away from the hole. They made room for Mannon, the team's unexploded ordnance (UXO) expert, who got calls like this throughout the day. He had come to examine a rusty-looking cylinder, about the size of an egg roll, which the diggers had turned up. Mannon pulled off his sunglasses, squatted in the pit and opened a knife, using the blade to pick the mystery object out of the dirt. "Another 20-millimeter round," he pronounced, easing the ordnance into a satchel, clapping his shades back on and trudging uphill to a jungle path at some distance from the work area. We stopped under a red and white sign emblazoned with skull and crossbones and a warning in English and Lao: "DANGER!!" it read, "UXO!" Just beneath it was a pit in which Mannon had collected another 50 such rounds, part of the Skyraider's 2,000-pound payload. He added the morning's find to the growing pile, which would double in size in the course of our weeks here.

"What would happen if you set off one of these rounds?" I asked him.

"Depends on where you hit it," he answered. "You could be blinded, or it could just take most of the meat off your hand."

When this dig was finished, Mannon would bury the recovered explosives to forestall an accidental detonation—a constant threat to farmers or anyone else who puts a spade to earth in this ordnance-packed landscape.

The United States dropped more than two million tons of explosives on Laos between 1964 and 1973, making it the world's most heavily bombed nation per capita, according to the United Nations Development Program. In the years since, the United States has spent millions to disarm ordnance in Laos, but bombs remain a hazard. That is why each recovery group is assigned a specialist such as Mannon, one of several team members on loan to JPAC for this mission.

Like other people deployed here, Mannon had seen combat in the current Iraq war. He admitted that he missed the excitement of battle, but he found the work in Laos rewarding. "There is no more honorable mission than this one—bringing one of our guys home," he said.

Even across the distance of time, a special bond links Bat Masterson to comrades who never knew him. "It's part of the code, man," said Sgt. Daniel Padilla, a soft-spoken 22-year-old marine from San Antonio, on loan to JPAC as radio man and communications specialist. He held out his right arm to illustrate the point. There, between his elbow and wrist, the code was tattooed in blue ink:

We few, we mighty few, we band of brothers, for he today who sheds his blood with me, shall forever be my brother.

"It's from Shakespeare," Padilla added. "This is when King Henry V is about to go into battle and he's rallying the guys." The tattoo artist had edited Shakespeare slightly, substituting "mighty" for "happy" and inserting "forever" in the last line, but the sentiment remained true to the original.

IN MOST CRIMINAL investigations, a case is considered "cold" if it remains unsolved for more than two weeks. The investigative trail in most of the JPAC cases, by contrast, has been cold for 20, 30 or 40 years, with witnesses dying, landscapes shifting and evidence degraded by time and weather, as at Site 1303. "It's a puzzle with 10,000 pieces scattered around us," said Mannon, gazing down at workers screening soil and hoisting buckets of dirt up the mountainside. "We've got to figure out how all the pieces fit together."

"I love things that go boom," says Marine Staff Sgt. Steve Mannon, with one of the many Vietnam War-era rounds uncovered at the crash site.

SGT. CHRISTOPHE PAUL / US ARMY

After a few days of digging, those pieces began to pile up, making it look as if Bat Masterson had not bailed out after all, but had perished on the hillside in 1968.

By early November, Goodman had examined and bagged several hundred pieces of bone, which she labeled as "possible osseous remains," for future scrutiny by JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii. Like the bones recovered previously from the site, these were burned bluish gray and broken into fragments the size of a fingernail, too damaged and small for DNA sampling, which usually requires at least two grams of dense bone, such as from an arm or a leg. Three other bone fragments from the site were also too damaged for DNA, but they were nonetheless big enough for Goodman to see that they were human. Since

there was no village at Site 1303, no cemetery there and no history of human occupation, it was reasonable to suppose that the remains belonged to Bat Masterson.

Other evidence pointed toward that same conclusion. Three more coins—nickels dating from 1963, 1964 and 1965—were recovered, as were more than 30 unfired rounds from a .38-caliber weapon, most likely the sidearm Masterson carried on flying missions. "Most pilots carried a sidearm like that," Goodman said. "If you ejected from the plane, you'd keep it with you in the jungle. It wouldn't be with the wreck unless *you* were with the wreck."

While Goodman talked, cicadas buzzed high in the trees around us and a boombox near the impact crater churned out an odd mix of Elvis, Lao pop, zydeco tunes

Hmong villagers, paid modestly as day laborers, form a bucket brigade, passing excavated earth up the hillside to a screening station.

and a piece that I was old enough to identify as Wild Cherry's only hit ". . . Play that funky music, white boy! Play that funky music right!" This tune caused Hmong and Americans to dance as they sifted dirt, picked out artifacts and passed them along to Beth Claypool's roost on the hill above the screening station.

Claypool, 21, a Navy Parachute Rigger Second Class and the mission's "life support analyst," spent afternoons sorting through hundreds of pieces of broken metal, wiring, tattered cloth and other gleanings to determine their hidden importance. She traveled with a library of technical manuals and old photographs, which helped to identify occult bits of aircraft engines, rivets, snaps and buckles emerging from the dirt. I often sat with her at the sorting station and marveled at her ability to separate gold from dross. One day she pulled out a slab of rust, studied it for a few seconds and declared it a pocket-knife. "See the metal loop on the end of it?" she asked, pointing out the clasp that might have secured a line to the owner's vest. Setting aside the knife for Goodman to examine, Claypool turned her attention to an ordinary-looking screw with an oversize head and a short body. Noticing that it was threaded unconventionally—it tightened to the left instead of the right—she determined that it was the visor adjustment device from the top of a pilot's helmet; thus, its reversed threading. "No other screw looks like that one," she said. The rest of the helmet was never recovered, but this small piece of metal would prove to be a critical bit of evidence placing Masterson with the wreck.

Investigators have learned that even seemingly insignificant items can hold special meaning, especially for family members who often recognize the quirks of loved ones among personal effects. "We don't ignore any of that evidence," said Army Maj. Rumi Nielsen-Green, a media officer for JPAC. "We've had cases in which a wife knew that her husband always carried a combination of lucky coins, or a sister remembered the bundle of rubber bands her brother kept in his pocket. You never know what is going to help close the circle."

In the days ahead, other artifacts would emerge to round out the picture—the fragmentary remains of a parachute still folded neatly into a corner of its pack, a harness buckle, several zippers from a flight suit, a captain's rusty insignia pin and a metal insole from a pilot's boot. The insole was surprisingly small—size seven or so—but it was a likely match for Bat Masterson, who stood 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighed 137 pounds. "I knew what it was as soon as I saw it," said Navy Cdr. Joanne Petrelli, who uncovered the insole while swinging a pickax in the pit one afternoon. "It was the shape of a human foot. It was about the size of my husband's foot. He's small, too—and he's a marine."

WHILE STRONGLY suggestive, such evidence was hardly conclusive. That changed on the day that Army Sgt. Christophe Paul, 33, a combat photographer attached to JPAC, discovered a clay-caked sliver of metal in his screening tray, rubbed off the mud and reached for his radio.

"Hey, Zib," he said. "What is the name of the guy you are looking for?"

"Michael John Masterson," she answered.

"I think I have his ID tag here."

Goodman came bounding over, examined the dog tag and rendered a verdict: "Looks like Chris is buying the beers

PAUL HU; P. 45 SGT. CHRISTOPHE PAUL / US ARMY

American service members work alongside Hmong villagers to sift through dirt for bits of of evidence. Clues—consisting of broken glass, rusted metal and fragments of human bone—emerge from the quarter-inch screens.

tonight," she said, setting off a ripple of cheers down the hillside. Everyone crowded around for a look at the tag, which was stamped with Masterson's particulars. Goodman also noticed that the tag was bent, as the insole had been, most likely from the impact of his crash.

For Christophe Paul, a French native who joined the Army in 1999 and became a U.S. citizen in 2005, this moment of discovery fulfilled a dream. "I have been fascinated by archaeology since I was a little boy when my mother took me to see a King Tut exhibit in Paris. Now here I am doing it! I was so happy to find this ID, so we can get this guy home again."

Like Paul and other members of the armed forces, Masterson had worn two dog tags. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Tommy Phisayavong discovered the second one, bent like the first, in the screening station a few days later. Like Paul, Phisayavong had immigrated to the United States and become a citizen, but his journey had been torturous by comparison. Born and raised in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, he fled the country in 1978 after three years of the Pathet Lao regime. He was 13 at the time. He crossed the Mekong River to Thailand under cover of darkness, accompanied by his 10-year-old brother. They joined an uncle in a refugee camp there, and one by one, other members of the family crossed the river. Eventually, they made their way to the United States, where they settled in California.

"I never thought I'd see Laos again," said Phisayavong, who joined the Air Force in 1985 and was eventually assigned to JPAC as a language specialist. Now a veteran of many recovery missions, he sees Laos all the time, acting as interpreter and cultural envoy among team members, Lao officials and Hmong villagers like the ones who trudged several kilometers to work at our site each day.

Sifting dirt with the Hmong, I often wondered what they thought of our sudden appearance among them, this ragtag crew of Americans in sunglasses and muddy jeans, arriving in a swirl of dust whipped up by helicopters. I wondered what they thought of our raucous music and our tepid enthusiasm for the steamed bee larvae they thoughtfully provided as a morning snack. Most of all, I wondered how the Hmong regarded our compulsion to comb through the earth for the scanty remains of a man who had been resting here for so long, seemingly forgotten.

I was never able to speak to the Hmong about these things because Lao officials, still nervous about foreign contact with the tribesmen, discouraged conversation. But Tommy Phisayavong provided some insight, based on his own long experience in the territory. "It may seem a little strange to them that we go to these lengths to find people," he admitted. "You know, most of them believe that when you die, you stay where you are and that's that. We try to explain why it's important for us to bring the dead back and put them to rest. We've done enough of these missions over the years that I think maybe they understand that it's part of our ritual."

OUR OWN RITUALS of digging, screening and sorting began to pall after almost a month, the buckets yielding progressively less as the excavation approached the edge of the jungle. "That's just what you want," said Goodman. "You don't find much at the beginning. You find a lot in the middle. And it tapers off at the end. That means we've been digging in the right place."

Despite the chaos of the wreckage, the extensive scavenging and the acidic soil eating away at bone and steel for nearly four decades, the team had culled more than enough evidence to close Site 1303. When we decamped from Laos, the jungle would creep in and gradually obscure the drama of loss and restoration that had unfolded here.

Beth Claypool, a Navy parachute rigger, holds a key find from the Laotian dig, the remains of a metal insole believed to be Bat Masterson's.

What little remained of Bat Masterson was carefully labeled and placed in 26 small plastic bags, each keyed to the place and date of its discovery. Other artifacts, consisting of personal effects and material evidence, filled another 75 bags. The entire yield fit neatly into a black Pelican briefcase, which Goodman secured with two brass padlocks and kept in her possession for the long journey home. To guarantee the integrity of these investigations, JPAC follows a strict protocol, maintaining a chain of custody from field to laboratory, as if the evidence had to withstand courtroom scrutiny.

SGT. CHRISTOPHE PAUL / US ARMY

Goodman's Pelican case stayed within reach on a crowded military flight from Pattaya, Thailand, where we joined other teams returning from operations in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand. It had been a good season for some, indifferent for others. Three or four MIA investigations would be resolved as a result of their work, and there would also be new missions: members of one investigative team told me that they had pinpointed ten new sites for excavation in Laos alone. Other projects in the region, and from World War II, would keep JPAC busy for years to come.

Critics might wonder if the elaborate effort is worth it. At a time when the United States is engaged in war on two fronts and the military is sorely pressed for resources, was this exercise an extravagance?

Goodman had heard this question before. "We owe it to the people who made the ultimate sacrifice," she said. "There were bad feelings about what happened in Vietnam. The people who went there never got the recognition they deserved. We owe it to them and to their families to make this extra effort now, as a kind of reparation."

After a 20-hour flight through darkness, nearly 200 bleary-eyed soldiers, marines, sailors, airmen and civilians staggered off the plane into the blinding afternoon sun at Hawaii's Hickam Air Force Base. There were no brass bands and no honor guards to mark this homecoming. Those ceremonies would come later, after the findings from our recovery team—and those from others—had been subjected to rigorous scientific review in the Central Identification Laboratory. Only then could identifications be confirmed, families briefed and remains sent home for burial.

In the meantime, Goodman and the other anthropologists signed over their evidence to the laboratory, which triggered the meticulous review process. While she wrote her excavation report, the rest of the case was analyzed by other lab specialists and finally sent for outside review.

"There's peer review at every step," explained Thomas Holland, the lab's scientific chief, who collects the outside reviews and scrutinizes them. "That's when I write the final report, which makes the identification and spells out the justification for it. By that time the case has to be airtight."

Depending on the quality of the evidence and the complexity of the case, a review can take up to a year. This can be excruciating for families who have already endured so much—but it would be even worse if the process concluded with a case of mistaken identity. "We don't want any doubts," said Holland. "Our goal is to make certain that there is never another unknown soldier."

It seems unlikely that there ever will be, given the forensic techniques available today. Last year alone, the Central Identification Laboratory resolved a hundred cases, almost evenly divided between Vietnam and World War II. Some were identified by DNA sampling but most by dental records, still the most reliable means of providing a name for the dead.

Since neither teeth nor DNA was available in Masterson's case, it was finally closed, February 7, 2006, on the basis of circumstantial evidence. Later that month, Air Force officers presented the findings, along with Masterson's dog tags, a few coins, other effects and a copy of the case file, to his wife.

Her reaction was surprising. "I told them I didn't agree with any of it," she said. "It's all based on circumstantial evidence. I still don't know that he is dead or alive. He could be in a POW camp." Fran clings to that hope, based on the 1972 intelligence report that listed Masterson as captured.

A month of digging produces sufficient evidence—including two dog tags stamped with Bat Masterson's name—to solve the longstanding mystery of his fate.

But what about the dog tags, the bone fragments, the unused parachute, the insole matching her husband's foot size?

"All circumstantial," she said. "They just want to close this case and get it off the books. We've gone all this time. What's the hurry?"

She has appealed the findings, which will be reviewed by a board of senior military officers from all service branches, and if necessary, returned to the laboratory for further investigation.

Meanwhile, the remains of Bat Masterson will stay where they have been since last Thanksgiving, locked in a Hawaiian laboratory, halfway between Laos and home.

PAUL HU

Visit Smithsonian.com for an interview with author Robert Poole.

Snap Judgm

Smithsonian magazine 3rd ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST

IT'S BEEN SAID that good photography involves a collision of the new and the known: a fresh take on an ancient ritual, say, or an intimate portrait of a stranger. Our grand prize winner—an image of a sumptuous statue shaded by umbrellas—is a photograph of a cremation rite in Bali.

For the first time, contestants submitted their work exclusively on-line. We received some 7,500 entries from all 50 U.S. states and from 74 foreign countries (including Bahrain, Myanmar and Pakistan). As in years past, our judges selected 50 finalists, in 5 categories: The Natural World, People, Travel, Americana and, new this year, Altered Images. The Natural World and Travel are perennial favorites—together they received more than half the entries. Children remained favorite subjects—as did close-ups of insects. Hmmmm.

Nearly a third of the finalists come from outside the United States, a notable increase from past years. Most live in urban areas, though small towns such as Millersburg, Indiana (pop. 868), were also represented. Entrants range in age from Generation Y to baby boomer. When asked their occupation, nearly two-thirds listed "amateur photographer" rather than a day job. (Professional photographers are ineligible.) You can see all 50 finalists' photographs on our Web site at Smithsonian.com. That's also where we'll publish, in September, the rules for our Fourth Annual Photo Contest. To all who participated, and particularly to the finalists and winners, thanks, congratulations and happy shooting.

GRAND PRIZE WINNER, TRAVEL

PANG PIOW KAN, AGE 60
PENANG, MALAYSIA

PHOTOGRAPHED AUGUST 2005

In Bali, Indonesia, cremation is believed to liberate the souls of the dead so that they can reincarnate. In this photograph, Pang records a tribute to the ancestors of people living in Bali's Sanur region. "All the offerings to and belongings of their ancestors are gathered around a nearby beach," he says. After prayers, "the offerings are then released into the ocean, signifying the ending of mourning and loss."

ents

The winners (and some runners-up) of SMITHSONIAN*'s annual photo contest take a bow*

WINNER, PEOPLE

JEFFREY RAHEB, AGE 50
BROOKLYN, NY

PHOTOGRAPHED JULY 2003

Raheb, a composer of jazz music, felt a connection to Segundo, a retired percussionist Raheb encountered within the old quarters of Havana. Segundo personified the elegance of Cuba's colorful past, says Raheb, and he "had charm and class even though his clothes were old and frayed." Segundo "carried himself with confidence and pride even in the face of poverty."

WINNER, THE NATURAL WORLD

BYRON ARNAO, AGE 41
GLEN ROCK, NJ

PHOTOGRAPHED DECEMBER 2004

Says Arnao of this photograph of a Long Island snowdrift: "The sun broke on a 20-degree morning with howling winds to create amazing fusions of sand and snow. As a kid I was fascinated by the wind sculptures in the wake of a blizzard. In the morning, I would rush out just to watch the blowing snow sparkle in the morning light and form snow dunes that seemed replicas of the great deserts of the earth."

WINNER, AMERICANA

KIVIN BAUZO, AGE 35
CLEVELAND, OH

PHOTOGRAPHED OCTOBER 2003

One day Bauzo ran into a barbershop eight blocks from his home. "As I was leaving, a boy resting on his bike lost in thought—along with the individuals in the background—caught my attention."

WINNER, ALTERED IMAGES

AARON KOTOWSKI, AGE 27
HARTFORD, CT

PHOTOGRAPHED JULY 2005

"I combined the petals, the stem and the bud of three different lilies," says Kotowski. "The flower bud is a cross section. I cut the actual flower bud down the middle with a razor to get this unique view of the amazing flower."

{ CONTINUED ON PAGE 54 }

WINNER, TRAVEL

AMANDA MACK, AGE 32
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

PHOTOGRAPHED JULY 2004

While traveling through coastal Vietnam, Mack spent several days observing this fisherman. "Three to four times a day he lowered the net, then hours later raised it and retrieved his catch. On this occasion, he caught only seaweed . . . but the net became a golden lasso" in the sun.

*2005 Center for Automotive Research study. Includes Toyota, Lexus, nine assembly and supplier companies, and jobs created through their operations.
**Toyota vehicles and components are built using more than 75% sourced parts. © 2006

Toyota U.S. Operations	
Plants	10
Jobs	386,000*
Investment	$13 B

Being a good corporate citizen starts with hiring lots of good citizens.

WHAT'S A GOOD CORPORATE CITIZEN? It's not about awards or mission statements or press releases. It's about people. People who care about what they do and how they do it. And at Toyota, we know these people pretty well, because we hire them every chance we get.

You see it in every vehicle we build here.** Our over 32,000 team members take pride in everything they do. Quality, teamwork and dependability, that's what they are all about.

Our team members care about doing what's right; at work as well as in their local communities. They really are good citizens. Which in turn makes Toyota a better corporate citizen. Isn't it nice when things work out?

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FINALIST, PEOPLE

SHERYL LANMAN, AGE 25
HIGHLAND PARK, NJ

PHOTOGRAPHED NOVEMBER 2005

Lanman visited a preschool during a trip to the Dominican Republic with Habitat for Humanity: "As we were leaving, the children were standing in the doorway saying goodbye. . . . Each child's facial expression tells a uniquely different story, which contrasts with the uniformity of their school clothing."

FINALIST, PEOPLE

SEAN SHERIDAN, AGE 37
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO

PHOTOGRAPHED OCTOBER 2005

Says Sheridan of this survivor of a 1994 massacre in which 60,000 Rwandan Tutsis were killed: "He was shot and thrown into a mass grave. Miraculously, he did not die." When the man came to, Sheridan says, he scrambled out of the grave and walked to neighboring Burundi.

FINALIST, AMERICANA

IRA PEPPERCORN, AGE 50
ALEXANDRIA, VA

PHOTOGRAPHED SEPTEMBER 2005

After Hurricane Katrina, Peppercorn met a man who showed him an antique bed that had been his grandmother's. When she died 15 years ago, the family decided that he should inherit the bed because he was an artist and would take good care of it. "Now look at it," said the man. "It's ruined."

FINALIST, TRAVEL

TATIANA BITIR, AGE 46
ONTARIO, CANADA

PHOTOGRAPHED NOVEMBER 2004

It was a quiet, misty day, says Bitir of a visit to Paris. "I saw a horse flying and my dreams followed him up into the sky."

FINALIST, AMERICANA

RON OLSEN, AGE 47
GRAPEVINE, TX

PHOTOGRAPHED NOVEMBER 2005

Says Olsen of this atmospheric portrait of his son Mason, 12, facing the camera: "I had to jump a security fence to get close enough to properly frame the players and coach."

FINALIST, THE NATURAL WORLD

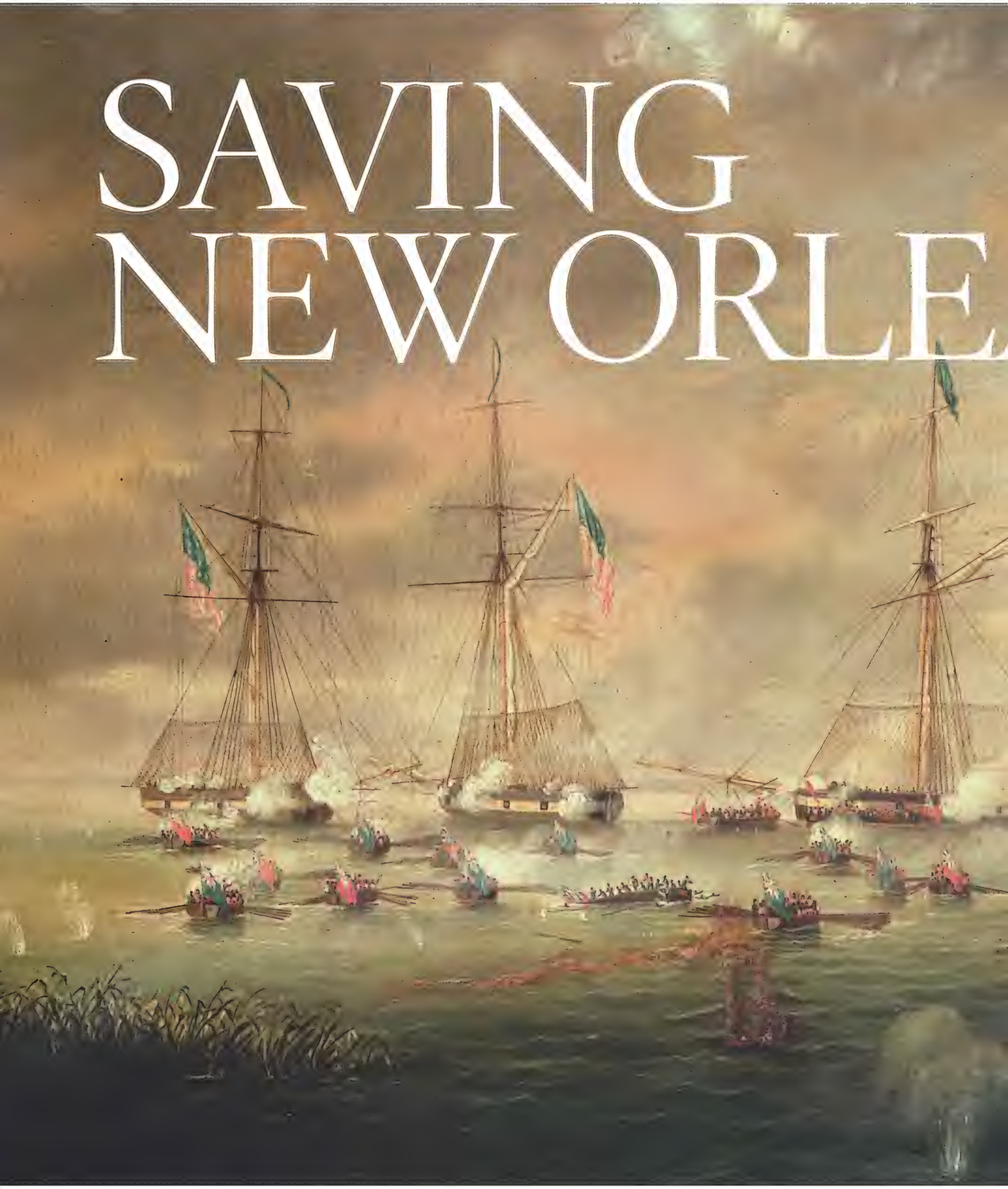
CARA SUCHER, AGE 34
DENVER, CO

PHOTOGRAPHED DECEMBER 2004

The Antarctic penguin, says Sucher, "appeared to be stuck above the ocean with no way to get down. . . . He scurried back and forth on the ledge, appearing completely perplexed. Finally, a second penguin called from the other side of the iceberg, and the penguin scurried off the way it came."

Visit Smithsonian.com to view all contest winners and finalists.

SAVING NEW ORLE



Opening salvo: On December 14, 1814, the British fleet disabled American gunboats (on Lake Borgne, above). After this triumph, wrote an English lieutenant, "From the General to the youngest drum-boy, [there was] a confident anticipation" the English would plunder the city. The invaders' prospects, however, soon darkened.

In a new book, *Patriotic Fire*, the author of *Forrest Gump* paints an uncommonly vivid picture of an overlooked chapter in American history—and its unlikely hero

BY WINSTON GROOM

BY AUTUMN 1814, the United States of America, barely 30 years old, was on the verge of dissolving. The treasury was empty, most public buildings in Washington, including the Capitol, the White House (then known as the President's House) and the Library of Congress, had been burned by a victorious and vengeful British Army, in one of the most dramatic incursions of the War of 1812. Festering tensions—arising out of Britain's interference with neutral America's lucrative maritime commerce—had erupted into hostilities in June of 1812. American seaports from the Atlantic to the Gulf of Mexico were blockaded by the British Navy, and the economy was in ruins. The U.S. Army was stymied and stalemated; the Navy, such as it was, had fared little better.

Then, as leaves began to fall, a mighty British armada appeared off the Louisiana coast with the stated purpose of capturing New Orleans, America's gateway to the great Mississippi River Basin. The misfortune would have split the United States in two. New Orleans was as nearly defenseless as a city could be in those days, with only two understrength Regular Army regiments totaling about 1,100 soldiers and a handful of untrained militia to throw against nearly 20,000 veterans of the British Army and Navy, who were descending upon it as swiftly and surely as a hurricane.

Orders from the secretary of war went out to the legendary Indian fighter Gen. Andrew Jackson, then in nearby Mobile, Alabama. He should go immediately to New Orleans and take charge.

CENTRAL TO THE BRITISH DESIGN for the capture of Louisiana, which had been admitted to the Union in 1812, was an extraordinary scheme devised by Col. Edward Nicholls to enlist the services of the "pirates of Barataria"—so named for the waters surrounding their barrier island redoubt—who were for the most part not pirates at all but privateers, operating under letters of marque from foreign countries. Under the agreed concessions of mar-

itime law, these official letters, or commissions, allowed privateers to prey on the merchant shipping of any nation at war with the issuing country without—in the event they were captured—being subject to hanging as pirates.

In the Gulf of Mexico, a large gathering of these ruthless men had set up operations on Grand Terre Island, Louisiana, which lies about 40 miles south of New Orleans as the crow flies. The leader of this band was a tall, handsome, magnetic Frenchman named Jean Laffite, who, using his blacksmith shop in New Orleans as a front, came to run a phenomenal smuggling business for the grateful citizens of New Orleans, rich and poor alike, who had been harmed for years by an American embargo on international trade—a measure intended to deprive Europe of raw materials—and by a British blockade designed to stifle American commerce.

It was to the Baratarians that Colonel Nicholls dispatched his emissaries from HMS *Sophie* to see if they could be enlisted into the British effort against New Orleans. On the morning of September 3, 1814, the *Sophie* dropped anchor off Grand Terre. Through spyglasses the British observed hundreds of sleepy-eyed, ill-dressed men gathering on a sandy beach. Presently a small boat was launched from the beach, rowed by four men with a fifth man in the bow. From the *Sophie*, a longboat was likewise launched, carrying its captain, Nicholas Lockyer, and a Captain McWilliams of the Royal Marines. The boats met in the channel, and Lockyer, in his best schoolboy French, asked to be taken to Monsieur Laffite; the response from the man at the prow of the small boat was that Laffite could be found ashore. Once on the beach, the two British officers were led through the suspicious crowd by the man in the bow, along a shaded path, and up the steps of a substantial home with a large wraparound gallery. At that point he genially informed them, "Messieurs, I am Laffite."

Scourges of the sea: Dashing Jean Laffite (left) and his swashbuckling brother Alexandre, although a study in contrasts, were equally intrepid.

JEAN LAFFITE remains among the most enigmatic figures in the American historical experience, right up there with Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone, Kit Carson, Wyatt Earp and Wild Bill Hickok. The youngest of eight children, Laffite was born in Port-au-Prince in the French colony of San Domingo (now Haiti) around 1782. His father had been a skilled leatherworker in Spain, France and Morocco before he opened a prosperous leather shop on the island. Jean's mother died "before I could remember her," he said, and he was raised by his maternal grandmother.

His older brothers, Pierre and Alexandre, would figure prominently in his life. After a rigorous education beginning at age 6, Jean and Pierre, two and a half years his elder, were sent away for advanced schooling on the neighboring islands of St. Croix and Martinique and then to a military academy on St. Kitts.

Alexandre—11 years Jean's senior—returned occasionally from his adventures as a privateer attacking Spanish ships in the Caribbean and regaled his younger brothers with stories of his exploits. They were so captivated by his tales that nothing would do but for them to follow him to sea.

When Jean and Pierre arrived in Louisiana from Haiti in 1807, they came as privateersmen—a barely respectable and an unquestionably dangerous business. Laffite, then in his mid-20s, was described as dark-haired, about six feet tall, with "dark piercing eyes," a furious vertical crease in his brow and a comportment something like a powerful cat. He was also said to be intelligent, convivial and a gambling and drinking man.

Joseph Sauvinet, a Frenchman who had become one of the principal businessmen of New Orleans, quickly recognized the value of a resourceful man such as Laffite. Sauvinet set up Jean and his brothers in the smuggling business, with instructions on how to avoid U.S. Customs by offloading their goods downriver below a bend called English Turn, from where the cargo could be transported to Sauvinet's warehouses for resale in New Orleans.

Laffite and his men chose as their base of operations the remote Barataria Bay. It must have seemed a paradise, a place of breathtaking natural beauty and serenity. In addition, Grand Terre was elevated enough to provide protection from all but the worst hurricanes.

Under Jean's stewardship, the privateers captured more than 100 vessels and their cargoes, the most valuable of which were slaves taken in the waters around Havana, which had become the center of the slave trade in the Western Hemisphere.

From *Patriot Fire* by Winston Groom. Copyright 2006 by Winston Groom, published by Knopf.

HISTORIC NEW ORLEANS COLLECTION (2); PP. 56, 57 BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

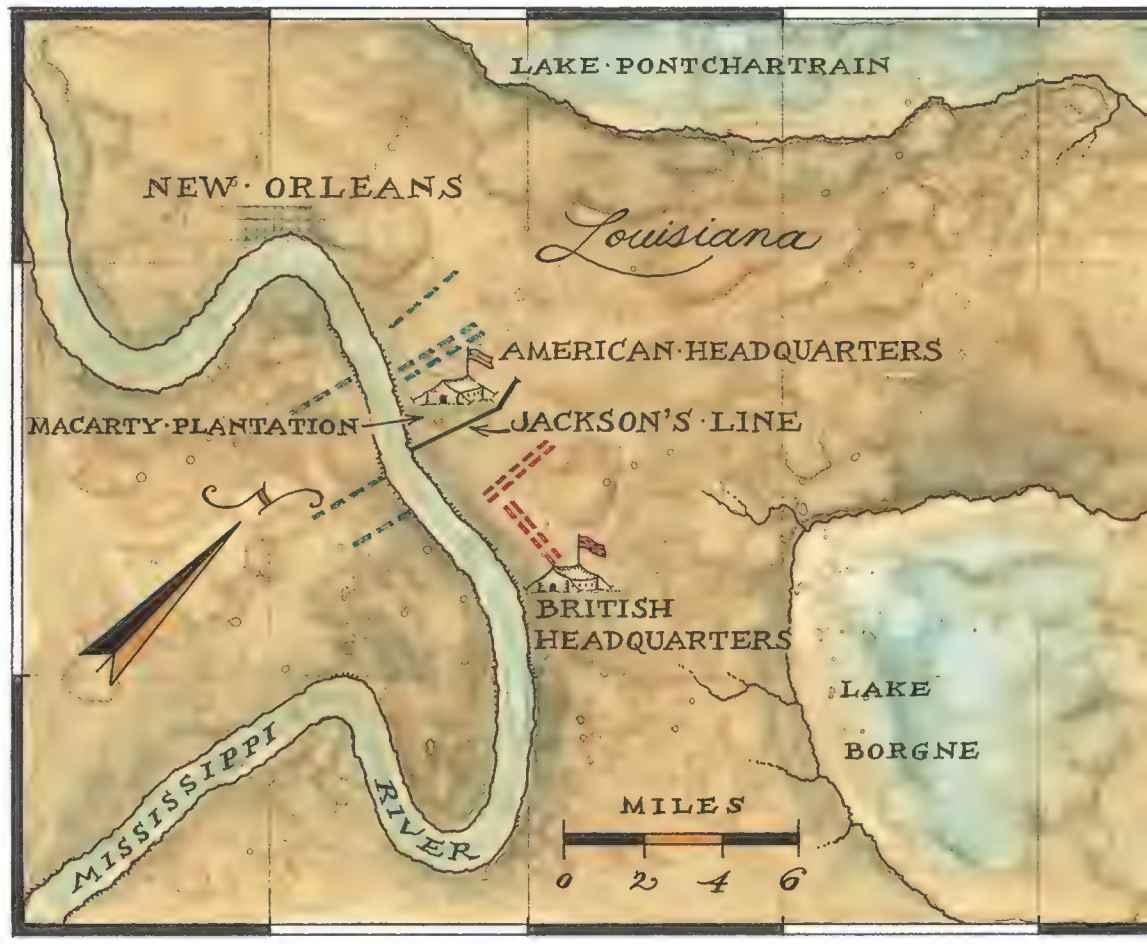
With the exception of Laffite, who still attired himself as a gentleman, the rest of the Baratarians—there would be probably more than 1,000 of them—dressed like swashbuckling pirates: red-and-black striped blouses, pantaloons, tall boots, and colorful bandannas tied around their heads. Many wore gold earrings, and all carried cutlasses, knives and pistols.

As business grew, the Baratarians became increasingly outrageous. They posted fliers in broad daylight on buildings throughout New Orleans, announcing their booty auctions, held in the swamp halfway between Grand Terre and New Orleans. These were attended by the city's most prominent men, who bought up everything from slaves to pig iron, as well as dresses and jewelry for their wives.

Meanwhile, Laffite began to squirrel away large stores of arms, gunpowder, flints and cannonballs at secret locations. These munitions would prove critically important when the Battle of New Orleans broke out.

THE BRITISH DELEGATION THAT came to enlist Laffite in the attack on New Orleans handed over a packet of documents signed by Capt. W. H. Percy, the British senior naval commander in the Gulf of Mexico. Percy threatened to send a fleet to destroy the Baratarians and their stronghold because of their privateering activities against Spanish and British shipping. But if the Baratarians would join with the British, he said they would receive "lands within His Majesty's colonies in America" and the opportunity to become British subjects with a full pardon for any previous crimes.

A personal note from Colonel Nicholls to Laffite also requested the use of all the boats and ships of the Baratarians and the enlistment of Baratarian gunners and fighters in the invasion of Louisiana. The privateers' assistance, Nicholls informed Laffite, was crucial. Once New Orleans was secured, the British planned to move the army upriver and "act in concert" with British forces in Canada, as Laffite later recalled, "to shove the Americans into the Atlantic Ocean." The British officers indicated that His Majesty's forces also intended to set free all the slaves they could find and enlist their help in subduing the Americans.



The final battle took place near the Macarty plantation (above, center), six miles southeast of New Orleans: had Andrew Jackson not beaten back the British, the city surely would have fallen. Laffite's advice to Jackson—that he must extend his rampart, or line, so far into the swamp that the British could not get behind the Americans—proved invaluable.

The two Englishmen next offered Laffite their *pièce de résistance*: a bribe of 30,000 British pounds (more than $2 million today) if he would convince his followers to join with the British. Playing for time against the threatened British assault on his stronghold, Laffite told the two envoys he needed two weeks to compose his men and put his personal affairs in order. After that, Laffite promised the Englishmen, he and his men would be "entirely at your disposal."

AS HE WATCHED THE BRITISH sail away, Laffite must have considered taking the bribe. He must have also considered the British promise to free his brother Pierre, who had been charged with piracy and was locked in a New Orleans jail facing the hangman's noose. On the other hand, Jean, though a Frenchman by birth, apparently considered himself something of a patriot where America was concerned. After all, the country had been good to him. He had amassed a fortune (though in blatant contravention of its laws) by smuggling on its shores. He promptly sat down with pen and paper and proceeded to double-cross his newfound British friends.

Laffite's letter to the U.S. authorities amounted to a declaration of patriotism. Addressing himself to his powerful friend Jean Blanque, a member of the Louisiana legislature, Laffite revealed the entire British scheme: a huge fleet containing an entire army was at the moment gathering for an attack on the city.

If Laffite thought that the New Orleans authorities were now going to forgive him for smuggling, however, he was mistaken. Blanque delivered Laffite's communiqué to Louisiana governor William C.C. Claiborne, who convened the legislature's recently organized Committee of Public Safety. Most committee members insisted that the letters must be forgeries and that Laffite was a lowdown

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WINSTON GROOM *is the author of numerous histories, including* 1942: The Year That Tried Men's Souls, Shrouds of Glory *and* A Storm in Flanders, *as well as the novel* Forrest Gump.

MIKE REAGAN

The pirate Jean Laffite, who called himself "a stray sheep wishing to come back into the fold," offered his services "in defense of the country."

pirate simply trying to get his brother out of jail. But Gen. Jacques Villeré, head of the Louisiana militia, declared that the Baratarians had adopted the United States as their country and that they could be trusted. In any event, Cmdre. Daniel Patterson and Col. Robert Ross announced they were going ahead with their expedition to oust Laffite from Grand Terre.

Laffite, who had been anxiously on the lookout for the return of his messenger, was both surprised and delighted to see in the messenger's pirogue none other than his brother Pierre, who had magically "escaped" from jail. (The magic probably had something to do with bribery.) Laffite's spies in New Orleans also returned with the unpleasant news that Patterson's flotilla and army were assembling at New Orleans to put him out of business. This prompted Laffite to write another letter, this time to Claiborne himself, in which Laffite candidly admitted his sin of smuggling but offered his services and those of the Baratarians "in defense of the country," asking in return a pardon for himself, Pierre, and any other of his men who were indicted or about to be. "I am a stray sheep," he wrote, "wishing to come back into the fold."

When Andrew Jackson saw Laffite's offer to bring his Baratarians to the defense of New Orleans in exchange for a pardon, Jackson denounced the Baratarians as "hellish Banditti."

Laffite, for his part, was well aware that his time limit to join the British invasion had expired and that several of His Majesty's warships now lay off Barataria Bay. Now the Americans, too, were organizing a force against him. Accordingly, he ordered most of the Baratarians to sail from Grand Terre with whatever of value they could carry, including munitions. He put his brother Alexandre, a.k.a. Dominique You, in charge of the island with about 500 men, instructing him to fight the British if they attacked and, if that proved unsuccessful, to burn all the warehouses and ships at anchor. Laffite then fled with Pierre, who had become ill, to a friend's plantation northwest of the city.

The American attack on Barataria came the next day, September 16, 1814. Jean's instructions to his men had been to not resist the Americans. As the ships, headed by the schooner-of-war *Carolina*, neared, word rang out that they were American. The Baratarians began to scramble for any means of escape—pirogues, rowboats, gigs—and headed into the trackless marshes.

"I perceived the pirates were abandoning their vessels and were flying in all directions," said Patterson. "I sent in pursuit of them." Most got away, but about 80, including Dominique, were captured and thrown into a lice-infested New Orleans jail known as the calaboose. The Americans burned the Baratarians' buildings—40 in all—and sent the captured goods up to New Orleans to be cataloged and filed for themselves as claims in the prize court. It was quite a haul for Patterson and Ross—estimated at more than $600,000 at the time—and that was the end of Barataria, though not of the Baratarians.

On November 22, Jackson finally responded to calls from New Orleans by saddling up with his staff and journeying overland from Mobile, personally scouting possible landing sites for a British invasion. By that time the general had become wracked with dysentery. When he arrived in New Orleans nine days later, gaunt and pallid, he could barely stand, but he was cheered by grateful crowds.

To some his appearance might not have inspired confidence: his clothes and boots were filthy from more than a week on the trail, his face was prematurely wrinkled for his 47 years, and his great head of hair had gone gray. But later that day, when he appeared on the balcony of his headquarters on Royal Street, there was something in his voice and his icy blue eyes that convinced most in the crowd that the city's salvation had arrived. Jackson "declared that he had come to protect the city, that he would drive the British into the sea, or perish in the effort."

SOON, EVENTS began to overtake New Orleans. On December 12, the British invasion force arrived offshore. Laffite, for his part, was still *persona non grata* in the city and, with an arrest warrant hanging over him, remained in hiding.

Just before 11 a.m. on December 14, the battle began on Lake Borgne, about 40 miles from the city. British sailors and marines quickly boarded American gunboats positioned there. The British suffered 17 killed and 77 wounded and captured five American gunboats with all their armaments and several boatloads of prisoners. Ten Americans had been killed and 35 wounded.

Jackson was once again faced with the question of what to do about Laffite and his Baratarians, many now scattered in hiding throughout the swamps. After a series of complex negotiations involving the Louisiana legislature and a federal judge, Laffite was escorted to Jackson's Royal Street headquarters. To his surprise, Jackson beheld not a desperado in pirate garb but a man with the manners and mien of a gentleman.

Nor did it hurt Laffite's case that Jackson, who already had commandeered many of Laffite's cannons, had found that New Orleans could offer very little in the way of ammunition and gunpowder. Laffite still had munitions in abundance, squirreled away in the swamps. Again he offered

them to Jackson, as well as the services of his trained cannoneers and swamp guides. Jackson concluded that Laffite and his men might well prove useful to the cause.

The Baratarians, accordingly, were organized into two artillery detachments, one under Dominique You and the other under the Laffites' cousin, Renato Beluche. Laffite himself was given an unofficial post as aide-de-camp to Jackson, who instructed him to supervise the defenses leading into the city from Barataria Bay.

On December 23, Jackson was shocked to learn that a British force had massed at a sugar plantation south of New Orleans. In a bold move, American soldiers attacked the British at night, slaughtering them with musket fire, tomahawks and knives. Their assault left the field strewn with British casualties—and slowed their advance.

Jackson moved his forces back a mile and began his defenses. All Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, Jackson's men labored to build and strengthen his soon-to-be-famous parapet. While walking the lines of the main fortification with his friend Edward Livingston, a prominent Louisiana lawyer, Laffite saw something that might have caused a shiver of fear to flow over him. At the far left end of the line, where it entered the cypress swamp, the rampart abruptly ended. Everywhere else, Laffite told Livingston, the army could fight from behind a rampart, but here the British were afforded an opportunity to get behind the American position—which was precisely what the British intended to do. Jackson immediately agreed with this assessment and ordered the rampart extended and manned so far back into the swamp that no one could get around it. Laffite's advice might well have been the best Jackson received during the entire battle.

With the victory at New Orleans, Andrew Jackson (in 1829) became a national hero destined for the White House. Laffite, however, claimed that without his and his fellow privateers' assistance, Jackson "would have tumbled into oblivion."

The fortification took an incredible effort, and when it was at last finished two weeks later, it was more than half a mile long, behind which lay a berm seven or eight feet high, bristling with eight batteries of artillery placed at intervals. In front of it, the men had dug out a ten-foot-wide moat.

On the morning of December 27, when the sun had risen enough to present a field of fire, the British battery opened on the *Carolina*, positioned in the Mississippi downriver of Jackson, at point-blank range. The warship blew up in a fantastic roar of smoke and flame. Another American vessel, the *Louisiana*, was able to avoid a similar fate by having her sailors pull her upriver. They anchored her right across from Jackson's ditch, his first line of defense.

Jackson decided to meet the British attack head-on. This was no easy decision, considering that his people were outnumbered in both infantry and artillery. But Jackson trusted his two Tennessee commanders, John Coffee and William Carroll, and had faith in the courage and loyalty of their men, with whom he had fought the Creek War. Likewise, he had come to trust the Creole fighters of Louisiana under their French-speaking officers.

Lastly, Jackson, who now looked upon Laffite's Baratarians as a godsend, ordered Dominique You and his cutthroat artillerists to come at once to the barricade. The Baratarians responded resolutely, with squat Dominique You, smiling his perpetual grin and smoking a cigar, leading the way. They arrived ready for a fight about dawn on December 28.

WHEN THE BRITISH ARMY came into view, it must have been both a magnificent and a disturbing sight. With drummer boys beating out an unnerving cadence, there soon appeared thousands of redcoats in two columns, 80 men abreast. They pressed forward until midafternoon, with American rifle fire—especially from the Tennesseans' long rifles—and the artillery taking their toll. Finally, the British commander, Gen. Sir Edward Pakenham, had seen enough; he called off the assault and took his army out of range of the American guns.

Much of the effective American artillery fire probably was the work of Laffite's Baratarian gunners. Laffite himself, some accounts say, had supervised the installation of two of the largest and most powerful guns in the line, the 24-pounders, which Jackson had ordered dragged down from New Orleans a day or so earlier. If so, Laffite had thus deliberately placed himself in a perilous position; had he been captured by the British, he would surely have been hanged for his double cross, if not on piracy charges. One gun was commanded by Dominique You and the other by Renato Beluche.

Then came New Year's Day, 1815. At 10 a.m., the British artillery began blasting away. Singled out for particular attention was the Macarty plantation house, Jackson's headquarters, wrecked by more than 100 cannonballs during the first ten minutes. Miraculously, neither Jackson nor any of

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his staff was injured. Covered with plaster dust, they rushed out to form up the army for battle.

According to the German merchant Vincent Nolte, the main British battery, situated near a road that ran through the center of sugar cane fields, "directed its fire against the battery of the pirates Dominique You and Beluche." Once, as Dominique was examining the enemy through a spyglass, "a cannon shot wounded his arm; he caused it to be bound up, saying, 'I will pay them for that!' . . . He then gave the order to fire a 24-pounder, and the ball knocked an English gun carriage to pieces and killed six or seven men." Not long afterward, a British shot hit one of Dominique's guns and knocked it off its carriage. While it was being repaired, someone asked about his wound. "Only some scratch, by gar," he growled, as he ordered his other cannon loaded with chain shot that "crippled the largest British gun and killed or wounded six men."

By noon, two-thirds of the British guns had been put out of action. General Pakenham had just learned that a 2,000-man brigade of British reinforcements had arrived in the Mississippi Sound. It would take a few days to transfer them to his army; after that, Pakenham determined to go all out at the Americans, now a force of about 5,000. For the British, the matter of supplies was becoming desperate. Their army of 8,000 to 10,000 men had been on the Mississippi for nine days and had devoured their provisions, in addition to ransacking the surrounding plantations for food.

With New Orleans just a few miles in the rear, Jackson had no such problem, and Laffite's supply of munitions seemed endless. Still, Jackson was fearful. He was outnumbered; his position on the Rodriguez Canal was just about the only thing standing between the British and New Orleans. On January 7, he spent most of the afternoon in the heavily damaged Macarty house, observing the British encampment. "They will attack at daybreak," he predicted.

On Sunday morning, January 8, the final battle began. Despite heavy fire from the Americans, the British came on relentlessly. Then, on Jackson's left, the British 95th Regiment waded across the ditch in front of Jackson's line and, since no fascines or scaling ladders had yet arrived, began desperately trying to carve steps into the rampart with their bayonets. Meanwhile, against orders, the leading companies of the British 44th stopped and began to shoot at the Americans, but when they were answered by a ruinous volley from Carroll's Tennesseans and Gen. John Adair's Kentuckians, they ran away, setting into motion a chain of events that would soon shudder through the entire British Army. "In less time than one can write it," the British quartermaster E. N. Borroughs would recall, "the 44th Foot was swept from the face of the earth. Within five minutes the regiment seemed to vanish from sight."

At one point Jackson ordered his artillery batteries to cease firing and let the clouds of smoke blow away, in order to fix the British troops clearly for more of the same. In Battery No. 3, he observed Capt. Dominique You standing to his guns, his broad Gallic face beaming like a harvest moon, his eyes burning and swelling from the powder smoke. Jackson declared, "If I were ordered to storm the gates of hell, with Captain Dominique as my lieutenant, I would have no misgivings of the result."

In only 25 minutes, the British Army had lost all three of its active field generals, seven colonels and 75 other officers—that is, practically its whole officer corps. General Pakenham was dead, cut down by American rifle fire. By now the entire British Army was in irredeemable disarray. A soldier from Kentucky wrote, "When the smoke had cleared and we could obtain a fair view of the field, it looked at first glance like a sea of blood. It was not blood itself, but the red coats in which the British soldiers were dressed. The field was entirely covered in prostrate bodies."

Even Jackson was flabbergasted by the sight. "I never had so grand and awful an idea of the resurrection as on that day," he later wrote, as scores of redcoats rose up like dim purgatorial souls with their hands in the air and began walking toward the American lines. "After the smoke of the battle had cleared off somewhat, I saw in the distance more than five hundred Britons emerging from the heaps of their dead comrades, all over the plain, rising up, and . . . coming forward and surrendering as prisoners of war to our soldiers." These men, Jackson concluded, had fallen at the first fire and then hidden themselves behind the bodies of their slain brethren. By midmorning, most of the firing had ceased.

Laffite, who was returning from an inspection of his stores of powder and flints deep in the swamp, got to the grisly field just as the battle ended, but he did not know who had won. "I was almost out of breath, running through the bushes and mud. My hands were bruised, my clothing torn, my feet soaked. I could not believe the result of the battle," he said.

On the morning of January 21, the victorious troops marched in formation the six miles from the battlefield to New Orleans. Two days later, Jackson's army was drawn up on three sides of the city's parade ground. The Tennesseans and Kentuckians were there, too, as were Laffite's red-shirted Baratarian buccaneers. Bands played, church bells pealed and a celebratory cannonade roared from the banks of the levee.

Laffite felt a particular gratitude "at seeing my two elder brothers and some of my officers lined up in the parade . . . whom the public admired and praised with elegies and honor for their valor as expert cannoneers."

ON FEBRUARY 6, President Madison sent out a proclamation pardoning Laffite and all the other Baratarians who had fought with the Army. Laffite assumed this also freed him to recover the property that had been confiscated by Commodore Patterson and Colonel Ross following their

On January 8, 1815, within 25 minutes of the British onslaught, the outcome of the battle had been decided: the Americans (in foreground) defeated a vast British army. A soldier from Kentucky would recall of the scene, "When the smoke had cleared . . . the field was entirely covered in prostrate bodies."

September raid on Grand Terre. Patterson and Ross disagreed; they had the property now and were backed up by the Army and the Navy. Laffite's lawyers filed suit, but Ross and Patterson began to auction off the property anyway, including 15 armed privateering ships. Laffite persuaded his old partners—who remained among the wealthiest and most influential citizens of New Orleans—to surreptitiously repurchase them for him, which they did. Laffite resumed preying on Spanish shipping under letters of marque from Cartagena.

In 1816, with some 500 of his men, he relocated to Galveston, 300 miles to the west. The Galveston enterprise quickly became profitable, and by 1818, Laffite had made arrangements to sell his captured goods to various merchants in the interior, as far away as St. Louis, Missouri. It wasn't long before the authorities in Washington got wind of his doings; President James Monroe sent a message to the effect that Laffite and his crews must depart Galveston or face eviction by U.S. troops.

Then, in late September 1818, a hurricane roared through Galveston Island, drowning a number of Laffite's men and wiping out most of the settlement's houses and buildings. Laffite set about rebuilding, managing to keep the authorities at bay for another two years. Finally, in 1821, he abandoned the Galveston redoubt and for all intents disappeared.

What became of him after Galveston has been the subject of much contradictory speculation. He was reportedly killed in a sea battle, drowned in a hurricane, hanged by the Spanish, succumbed to disease in Mexico, and murdered by his own crew.

If you believe his own journal—scholars disagree about its authenticity—Laffite had departed Galveston for St. Louis. There, he found God, married a woman named Emma Mortimere, fathered a son and settled down to the life of a landlubber.

According to the disputed memoir, at some point a chagrined Laffite, now turning portly, grew a beard and changed his name to John Lafflin. During his later years, he settled in Alton, Illinois, across the river from St. Louis, where he began writing a journal of his life. He lived there until his death in 1854 at the age of about 70.

He wrote in the memoir that he never got over the shabby treatment he felt he had received from the federal government and from the city he had risked his life and treasure to defend. And he mused bitterly over what might have happened if, instead of siding with the Americans, he had taken the British bribe. Answering his own hypothetical, he concluded that the Americans would have lost the battle, as well as Louisiana—and that there would have been no president of the United States named Andrew Jackson. The very name of Jackson, wrote Laffite, "would have tumbled into oblivion."

GRANGER COLLECTION, NEW YORK

CRESCENT CITY TWILIGHT

A photographer takes a pinhole view of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, which struck a year ago this month

PHOTOGRAPH BY TIMOTHY HURSLEY

MUCH OF NEW ORLEANS is bouncing back, its jazzy insouciance alive and well in some quarters, but a year after the most destructive natural disaster in U.S. history, the city also remains unsettled. About half of its population of 469,000 has yet to return home, 200,000 flood-wrecked residences are still uninhabitable, and National Guard troops arrived this past June to curb an outbreak of violent crime reportedly fostered by desolation.

Hurricane Katrina's emptying of the Crescent City is captured in this photograph by Timothy Hursley of a railroad yard along Press Street. The long line of relief trailers speaks to the enormousness of the human toll, and the bridges remind us of all the people stranded atop such spans as the waters rose. But it's the lurid twilight and ghoulish Mardi Gras dolls, especially the laughing girl with the fierce eyes, that make the image work.

DONNA PINCKLEY

Hursley, an architectural photographer based in Little Rock, took the picture this past March using an 80-year-old panorama camera with a pinhole opening instead of a lens. Pinhole photographs tend to have an unusual aura, which seems apt in this case. The picture has the nightmare-in-the-daytime atmosphere we recall from those scenes of desperate New Orleanians in the sun-washed days after the rains stopped and the winds died. It is, to say the least, unsettling. { BY TERENCE MONMANEY }

David Hockney and Friends

Though the artist doesn't think of himself as a painter of portraits, a new exhibition makes the case that they are key to his work

BY MATTHEW GUREWITSCH

BIG PREDICTIONS can take time to come true. When David Hockney, a working-class Yorkshire lad, left his Bradford school at 16 to go to art school, his English teacher and form master assessed him in these terms: "He has undoubted ability in art, especially in cartoon and sign-writing work. Although fundamentally a serious-minded boy, he has allowed his form-mates from his third-form days, to make him an almost legendary figure of fun. It is only in his last year that he has shown his serious side—but we have enjoyed his company." The headmaster appended a kindly valediction: "Best wishes to him in his new start. He will be glad to be rid of the 'figure of fun' & to establish himself as a sincere & serious person by steady work & merit."

For half a century, the boy from Bradford, as he still often calls himself, has been hard at it. He's 69 now, and the honors have accumulated. New work shows up constantly in commercial galleries as well as in such institutional extravaganzas as the Whitney Biennial of 2004, in New York City, and the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition that same year, in London.

"Hockney is so famous, so popular, such a great talker and character that it's easy to take him for granted as an artist," Jonathan Jones, the art critic of the *Guardian*, observed not long ago. "If you're a critic, it's tempting to give him a bash. But Hockney is a significant modern painter. He is one of only a handful of 20th-century British artists who added anything to the image bank of the world's imagination."

A major retrospective is an occasion, and such a thing is before us now. "David Hockney Portraits"—featuring some 150 paintings, drawings, etchings, photographic collages and watercolors—covers the work of more than 50 years. Alphabetically, the list of sitters in the show's catalog runs from the poet W. H. Auden (whom Hockney remembers as grumpy) to Karen Wright, editor of *Modern Painters* magazine, mostly by way of people only their immediate circles will have heard of. The show made its debut at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in February and is now on view at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art through September 4. Los Angeles is one of the cities to which Hockney's ties are closest; the other is London, where the tour concludes at the National Portrait Gallery (October 12, 2006 to January 21, 2007).

"There are no glamorous people in this show," Hockney said in Boston. The history of Western art has produced two basic types of portraitist. On the one hand, the professional brush for hire, who specializes in the rich and mighty: Hans Holbein the Younger, say, or Frans Hals, Sir Anthony Van Dyck or John Singer Sargent. Then there are the inveterate students of human nature:

"What finally can compare to the image of another human being?" asks Hockney (above, at about age 17 in a c. 1954 self-portrait, and opposite, with camera, in his Los Angeles studio in 2005 with curator Charlie Scheips, who was then posing for Hockney's *Self-portrait with Charlie*, in foreground).

© DAVID HOCKNEY; P. 67 © DAVID HOCKNEY, PHOTO BY DAVID HOCKNEY

Hockney's interest in the double portrait, says Los Angeles curator Stephanie Barron, is "to reflect on the relationship not only between the two subjects, but also between the two sitters and the artist." Hockney painted the photographer Jim McHugh and his teenage daughter, Chloe, in 2005 (above).

Albrecht Dürer, Michelangelo, Rembrandt van Rijn, Vincent van Gogh. Hockney places himself squarely in the latter camp: a portraitist for art's sake. The commissions he has accepted over the decades are scarcely enough to count on the fingers of one hand.

Starting in spring 2005, Hockney has been immersed in a project of a very different sort: the landscapes of his native Yorkshire through the four seasons. "Portraits of trees!" he quips. Though he made suggestions for the current show, he didn't choose the pictures. "Ordinarily a show of portraits by one artist can be boring," he says. "The paintings must be interesting as paintings. That's why I wouldn't have thought of this. I've never thought of myself as a portraitist. But then I thought: I did portraits all the time." To encounter the paintings in full-court press is an occasion as novel for him as it is for any visitor.

He is not displeased, nor need the visitor be, that the definition of a portrait has sometimes been stretched beyond the breaking point. Does the vaguely autobiographical series "A Rake's Progress" (1961-63)—in 16 satirical etchings of his first impressions of America, inspired by the 18th-century printmaker William Hogarth—in any sense constitute a portrait? Not really, any more than does a full-length rear view of a nude in a swimming pool. Even so, there are aspects of Hockney's work—the landscapes (Grand Canyon, the Hollywood Hills), exotic locations (formal gardens of Japan, the Alhambra), the theater (ravishing sets for opera productions of Mozart, Wagner, Stravinsky, Ravel)—even the most latitudinarian curators would have had to exclude. No matter. "Art's subject is the human clay," W. H. Auden wrote in his long "Letter to Lord Byron." Hockney loves the passage and quotes it often: "To me Art's subject is the human clay, / And landscape but a background to a torso; / All Cézanne's apples I would give away / For one small Goya or a Daumier." Portraits—people—prove a uniquely apt lens for bringing Hockney's life's work into focus. It might, in fact, have been a neat touch to recycle Hockney's title for his first solo show, in 1963: "Pictures with People In."

THE BOSTON OPENING was a glittering affair, sumptuously catered, with free-flowing champagne and an open bar. Friends, portrait sitters and collectors had flown in from across two oceans. Seeing the portraits in the same galleries as many of the living originals was illuminating. "Art makes me see!" Hockney says, recalling the time in Chicago in

MATTHEW GUREWITSCH *writes on art and culture for such publications as the* New York Times *and the* Wall Street Journal.

© DAVID HOCKNEY

1995 when the great Monet retrospective opened his eyes to the bushes on Michigan Avenue, to the "beauty of a shadow on a leaf." In Boston, that remark took on new resonance. Stepping from the exhibition over to the smoking tent (the artist is a militant smoker), one had further opportunity to study quite a few of his subjects. The spontaneous play of expression—of glance returned and glance deflected, of curled lip or rising eyebrow—cried out for a great sketch artist's quick, accurate hand. Alas, the man of the hour wasn't working that night.

Called to the microphone in an auditorium filled to capacity, Hockney was brief in the extreme. "I've had one or two other big exhibitions," he began, beaming shyly (or was that a blush?). "It would never have occurred to me to do portraits. I don't know what to say. Thank you all." His tweedy clothes and his build, stooped from a lifetime behind the easel, recalled a bluff, outdoorsy country squire. Dancing eyes and an impish smile belied his years. His speech could not have lasted 60 seconds, yet his glow of deep pleasure gave it an eloquence.

On the whole, Hockney liked what he saw. Strolling through the exhibition the next morning for another private look, he gave an approving nod to the first of his rare commissioned portraits: the ailing Sir David Webster, retiring general administrator of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, painted in 1971. Against a blank wall, Sir David is seen in profile, gazing like a weary eagle from the roost of a Marcel Breuer chair. A vase of coral-pink tulips—Hockney's favorite flower—placed low on a glass coffee table brings the composition into coolly formal balance.

The artist looked more dubious about *The Photographer and his Daughter*, from 2005 (opposite), depicting Jim McHugh, a noted Los Angeles professional, and his teenage daughter, Chloe. Provocative hand on hip, Chloe glares out from the canvas as her father looks on from a chair, rubbing his chin. (Some viewers have been reminded of the unsettling eroticism of Balthus, the French-Polish antimodernist.) The night before, pretty in pink, Chloe had accommodated the news crews by standing by the painting and striking the same pose. But the canvas as a whole is a study in powdery blues, which Hockney is now thinking might look too dry. His preferred ratio of oil to pigment would explain that. "I don't use much oil," he notes. "I left Los Angeles just after finishing this one. I would have varnished it otherwise. That makes the darks richer too." He licks a finger and runs it over one of Chloe's blue eyes, scandalizing a curator. "See the difference?" Yes, for a second or two. Then the trace evaporates.

Hockney destroyed an earlier version of his 1972 *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)*, below—after working on it for about six months—because he felt that he had gotten the angle of the pool wrong. The model for the figure at right was Hockney's friend and lover at the time, Peter Schlesinger.

© DAVID HOCKNEY

Over the decades, Hockney has evolved into the living artist most deserving of the title Old Master: eager pupil to Giotto, Jan van Eyck, Leonardo, Caravaggio, Velázquez, Rembrandt, Vermeer and Ingres. His principal forebears among the moderns include van Gogh and, above all, Picasso, whose 30-plus volume *catalogue raisonné* ranks as a prize possession. To Hockney's regret, he and Picasso never met. But after the Spaniard's death in 1973, Hockney came to know and work with Aldo Crommelynck, Picasso's printer for a quarter century, and Crommelynck told Hockney that he was sure "Pablo" would have liked him. Hockney paid posthumous tribute to Picasso in 1973-74 with his etching *Artist and Model*—showing himself (nude) and the older painter (in signature sailor's garb) seated face to face across a table.

The Hockney depicted in *Artist and Model* looks seriously studious, but the image is graceful and witty too. Did the figure of fun from the Bradford Grammar School ever go away?

© DAVID HOCKNEY

"Friends," says Hockney, "that's the only thread running through my life." He painted *Mr. and Mrs. Clark and Percy* in 1970-71 as a belated wedding gift for his friends Celia Birtwell and Ossie Clark. Divided by the brightly lit window, the pair appear to be more focused on Hockney than on each other. They separated not long after the picture was completed.

Peter Schlesinger, the young California Adonis who wandered into Hockney's drawing class at UCLA in 1966 and became his muse and lover for the next five years, once described his first glimpse of the artist this way: "He was a bleached blond; wearing a tomato-red suit, a green-and-white polka-dot tie with a matching hat, and round black cartoon glasses."

Revisiting the artist's life via the portraits in the exhibition may make viewers wish to turn back the clock to see him as he was then; thanks to the movies, they can. The bleached blond—Rodinesque of stature, petulant, languid, his nose to the canvas—is on view in all his outlandish glory in the strange, once scandalous, art-house film *A Bigger Splash* by the director and screenwriter Jack Hazan, first released in 1975. In a seamless blend of documentary and speculative fiction—part Proust, part Warhol—the film traces the slow death of Hockney's romance with Schlesinger. When the film was made, Hockney was but a boy wonder on the art scene, nothing near the full-blown media star he was to become. But he made good copy. As a figurative painter coming up in an age of abstraction, he had the appeal of the eccentric. In a Carol Channing/village-idiot hairdo, wearing mismatched socks, cutting a moody swath through what *Time* had dubbed Swinging London, he seemed rather a clown, if mostly a sad one.

Yet within the flow of Hazan's narrative, the viewer can already catch sight of Hockneys that by now stand as icons of 20th-century art: those vistas of California's cloudless skies, palm trees (stout or spindly) and, oh, those swimming pools. More to our immediate point, we catch glimpses of standout paintings from the current show: *Beverly Hills Housewife* (1966), for instance, which depicts Betty Freeman, who might be more accurately identified as a photographer and patron of new music. Likewise present: *Henry Geldzahler and Christopher Scott*, from 1969. An early and powerful champion of Hockney's, Geldzahler held a succession of influential cultural positions in New York (including curator of 20th-century art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art) until his death in 1994. He was not handsome, but he had a presence. In the double portrait, he imperializes the center of a pink Art Deco sofa vaguely reminiscent of an open seashell. His portly frame is clothed in a three-piece business suit and tie, minus the jacket. Skin shows above the sock on his right shin. Lips parted, sedentary, judgmental and remote, he stares straight out from behind rimless glasses, freezing out his partner, Scott, who stands in profile at far right in a belted trench coat. In Hazan's film, Geldzahler is seen studying his glasses as Hockney has painted them, an exercise visitors to the current show will find well worth their while. The highlights on the lenses and reflections of details in the room evoke the uncanny clarity of early Flemish painters.

The formality and stillness of the scene have put some critics in mind of a latter-day Renaissance Annunciation. Old Master allusions like this crop up all over the place in discussions of Hockney's art. To Barbara Shapiro, co-curator of the current show (with Sarah Howgate, of the National Portrait Gallery, London), this makes perfect sense. "Thanks to his book *Secret Knowledge*, people know that

"Hockney likes to paint people he knows, whose faces he knows," says L.A. curator Stephanie Barron. His mother, Laura (above, with his father, Kenneth, in *My Parents*, 1977), was a frequent subject. "If you don't know the person," Hockney has said, "you really don't know if you've got a likeness at all."

David is interested in the optical techniques of the Old Masters," she says. "But what they don't necessarily get is how much he loves the paintings as pictures, for the spaces they create and the stories they tell and the way they bring to life people from long ago and far away. More than other contemporary artists, he goes to exhibitions of artists from the past for the sheer excitement of it. Every time I visit his house, he's showing me art books and catalogs. His collection is amazing. It's exciting to talk with him about what he's looking at."

Hockney's immersion in the art of the past can be evident even in his depiction of a single face. In 1989, he would paint Geldzahler again—by now snowy-bearded—in a knit cap and plaid hunting jacket looking for all the world like a Titian doge. Or take the double portrait *Mr. and Mrs. Clark and Percy* (pp. 68-69), depicting friends of the artist's from the London fashion scene and their cat. Mrs. Clark—nee Celia Birtwell—soft and guileless in a floor-length robe of deep purple velvet, poses to one side of a half-shuttered French window. Mr. Ossie Clark, barefoot, in a sweater, a cigarette in hand, reclines in a cane-back metal chair, his air tense and guarded. On Mr. Clark's lap, a snow-white cat gives the viewer its back. The portrait has been likened—fancifully—to the Van Eyck masterpiece *The Arnolfini Wedding*, a painting that Hockney examined in his book *Secret Knowledge*.

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Still: that Old Master mantle. Does it compute to confer such gravitas on an artist so easy to enjoy? The keynotes of his work throughout a long career have been curiosity and *joie de vivre*, combined with a certain propensity to wear his heart on his sleeve. Like Matisse, he is a symphonist of the feel-good palette. His frank appreciation of male skin, especially in pools and showers, has opened him up to imputations of decadence and frivolity. "It's useful to recall," wrote *Time*, "that one of Hockney's enduring contributions to the history of the nude—we mean this—is the tan line." Besides, there is the matter of his technical experimentation. We're talking Polaroids here, video stills, photocopies, art by fax and, in a bold leap backward, the cumbersome camera lucida.

At the time, these departures could seem aberrant, misguided or simply silly. "David Hockney Portraits" offers a panorama of the work in virtually any medium you like, and the verdict, in retrospect, looks very different. As a wall label for the Boston installation proclaimed, "Hockney is unafraid of change." True enough, where technique is concerned. But changes in technique have served a consistent purpose: to approach, ever more closely, the circle of intimates who are the objects of his constant gaze.

Of course, one's vantage point affects the view. Deeply. Perspective, as Hockney once explained to a new acquaintance at a dinner party, is a matter of life and death. One-point perspective as codified in the Renaissance, he demonstrated with a little illustration, is a dead view, a mechanical view, the view of an unmoving, unblinking eye. The eye, in short, of the camera. But the human eye doesn't see like that. It's constantly in motion, even when we are standing still. Rather than one vanishing point, there should be vanishing points without number. "We're 3-D creatures," Hockney says. The artist's task, as he conceives it, is to capture the act of seeing as we experience it in the confines of two dimensions.

Hence, for instance, the experimental collages of Polaroids, snapshots and video stills that Hockney began making in the early 1980s and took to calling "joiners." The process taught him a lot about creating a sense of movement and feeling of space, and about collapsing an extended span of time into a single image. It has been said that with this technique of overlapping photographic images, and their inevitable slight discontinuities in time, Hockney taught the camera to draw. Thus he has taken what he understands to have been Picasso's Cubist agenda further. The point is not so much to show all sides of an object at the same time, but rather to enter into much closer proximity to it, to explore it more intimately. Doing so takes time, which may be why Hockney so seldom shows figures frozen in dramatic action. Hold a gesture and you get a pose: something inert, dead, fit only for the camera. The stillness in a Hockney painting is in a sense the summation of movement not seen: movements of the body, movements of thought, encompassing, as a snapshot cannot, stretches of time, rather than a single point.

That quality is one he looks for in the work of other artists too. Hockney himself has sat for portraits by many artists, from Warhol to British artist Lucian Freud. For the exacting Freud, he posed without regrets for a marathon 120 hours. "You see the layers," he says. Indeed, the weary-eyed portrait reveals hurts and gloom he does not always care to show in company. Not that Hockney doesn't see them himself. They are there in unsparing self-portraits from the past two decades. What's different about the self-portraits, though, is the fierce quality of Hockney's gaze locked on the mirror's.

In whatever medium, what drives Hockney is the need to render the act of looking. The faces he has chosen to look at are those of friends, lovers and other members of his household, including pets. "Oh, you're painting your dog," a friend once exclaimed in surprise as she walked into Hockney's studio to find a painting of his dachshund Stanley on the easel.

"No," came the reply. "I'm painting my love for my dog."

And kin: Hockney's father, Kenneth, an accountant's clerk of independent political convictions and fastidious sartorial habits; his mother, Laura, a Methodist and strict vegetarian, pensive and petite; his sister, Margaret; his brother Paul. Studying the parents' faces, it strikes me that David has inherited Kenneth's face and Laura's

One of Hockney's first Polaroid compositions, or "joiners," as he called them, was of his friend, Los Angeles gallery owner Nicholas Wilder, whom he pictured "studying Picasso" in March 1982. Hockney viewed these collages as "hours of layered time."

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"I paint what I like, where I like, and when I like, with occasional nostalgic journeys," Hockney (left, in 1995 in his Los Angeles studio with dachshunds Stanley and Boodgie and a series of dog paintings) declared in 1962. The artist likes to depict the same subject over and over. It's like visiting a favorite landscape and walking over the same land again and again, he says.

eyes. But family resemblances are elusive; a few steps on, I change my mind. "If you don't know the person," Hockney has said, "you really don't know if you've got a likeness at all."

Kenneth, as it happens, was the subject of the first painting Hockney ever sold: *Portrait of My Father* (1955), which was also one of his first oils. Recognizably a Hockney, yet tense and hardly prophetic in its morose tonality of blacks and browns, it was originally shown in the mid-1950s at the biennial Yorkshire Artists Exhibition in Leeds, principally a vehicle for local art teachers. Hockney put no price on it. He figured no one would buy it anyway. Even so, the opening on a Saturday afternoon, with free tea and sandwiches, struck him as "a great event, an enormous event." (He was in his late teens.) Imagine his amazement when a stranger offered him ten pounds. Since his father had bought the raw canvas ("I'd just done the marks on it"), Hockney wanted to clear the sale with him first. Kenneth said to take the money ("You can do another").

But there's more to the story. Not only had Hockney *père* bought the canvas, he had also set up the easel, a chair for himself to sit in and mirrors in which to watch his son's progress. He kibitzed constantly, complaining notably about the muddy colors. Hockney talked back: "Oh, no, you're wrong, this is how you have to do it, this is how they paint in the art school."

That spirited debate set a pattern Hockney still follows when the occasion warrants. Even now, he will set up mirrors for his sitters from time to time. *Charlie Sitting*, painted in 2005, is a result of this process. Poetic and allusive, the work seems a sort of reverse-gender illustration of the Victorian ballad "After the Ball." Dressed in a tuxedo, the subject—Charlie Scheips, a freelance curator and former Hockney assistant—slouches in a chair, tie undone, a flute of champagne in hand, a faraway look in his averted eyes.

Actually, Scheips told me at the Boston opening, the suggestion of heartbreak is pure illusion. Scheips donned his after-six finery early one morning at Hockney's request, then assumed the position. Knowing his model's interest in seeing him work, Hockney set up the mirror on which Scheips' eyes are fixed. Another painting from the same year, *Self-portrait with Charlie* (p. 65), depicts Scheips in his dual role as model and onlooker, perched on a side table, frankly absorbed in Hockney's unseen canvas-within-the-canvas.

Hockney doesn't mind being watched. On the contrary, it's what he lives for: "'I'm just looking,' people say. 'Just looking!' Looking is hard. Most people don't."

On the crest of the eastern Andes, about an eight-hour drive on a dirt road from Cuzco, Peru, is an expansive vista of one of the most diverse forests on earth. Storm clouds boil up in the pink evening sky, and fog advances over the foothills. The rain and fog suffuse the mountains with the moisture that makes them so astonishingly full of life.

Miles Silman, a biologist from Wake Forest University in North Carolina, brought me to this ridge to introduce me to the cloud forests of Peru. Clouds born of moisture rising from the Amazon River Basin sustain a great variety of trees, which in turn support ferns, mosses, bromeliads and orchids that struggle to lay down roots on any bare patch of bark. It's these epiphytes ("epi" means "on top of," and "phyte" means "plant"), plus the wet humus soil, the thick understory of plants and the immersion in clouds, that distinguish cloud forests from other types.

Silman and other scientists are attempting to catalog and understand the plant and animal life in Andean cloud forests before it's too late. Oil companies, having found petroleum and natural gas in the surrounding lands, are cutting roads and pipelines that scientists say are damaging some plant populations. Also, local farmers and ranchers clear cloud forest to expand their operations and harvest firewood.

Most significant, the cloud forests here are threatened by climate change. In other parts of the world, warmer temperatures in the past century have pushed native species toward the geographic poles or altered their seasonal growth and migration. In North America, for example, the

In these mysterious, foggy forests, many plants don't bother to send out roots—they suck all the moisture they need from clouds. Amphibians (a glass frog, above) thrive here, too, but they're among the first to suffer when temperatures rise.

UPHILL BATTLE

As the climate warms in the cloud forests of the Andes, plants and animals must climb to higher, cooler elevations or die

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL TENNESEN

ranges of the blue-winged warbler and other songbirds have shifted north; barn swallows and other birds are migrating earlier in the spring than they once did; and plants are blooming sooner. But cloud forests may be particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Of 25 biodiversity hot spots worldwide that conservation groups say deserve special protection, the tropical Andes is the richest by far, says biologist Lee Hannah of Conservation International. The region has almost twice as many plant species and four times as many endemic plants—native species found nowhere else in the world—as the next place on the list, the forests between central Mexico and the Panama Canal.

Many of the Andean plants have "shoestring distributions." That is, the area where they can root, grow and reproduce stretches over hundreds of miles horizontally—but only hundreds of feet vertically. Says Silman, "I could stand upslope and throw a rock across the elevational range of many different species." These plants' preferred altitudes—and therefore the altitudes of the birds and other animals that feed on them, pollinate their flowers and disperse their seeds—are determined largely by temperature. And as the Andes heat up through global warming, these plants may be evicted from their natural homes.

I head toward the cloud forest with six biologists and one field assistant. We plan to hike about 75 miles round trip, gaining and losing 9,000 feet in elevation over passes approaching 13,000 feet. The first day, we climb from the Yavero River west to the summit of an unnamed mountain in Peru's Manú National Park, one of the largest rain forest reserves on earth. Our goal is Callanga, a small valley in the heart of Manú. The initial pace of the hike has me breathing deeply, and I wonder if I will be able to keep up.

The Andes comprise high parallel ridges that follow the Pacific Coast of South America. In the north, these ridgelines can be moist on both sides, but in Peru, the western slopes are bone-dry and the eastern slopes are saturated by the mist and clouds. On the drive from Cuzco to our trail head, steep terraced farms covered the sides of these tall mountains like a mosaic. In the canyons between ridgelines the forest is mostly pine and eucalyptus, both introduced species. Farmers going back even before the Inca have removed much of the natural vegetation. Only when you get to the ridgeline next to the Amazon Basin, where we do our hiking, do native species start to dominate.

We reach the Manú Park outpost, above the tree line, just before sundown. In the morning we fill up on oatmeal and start down the other side of the mountain. Trudging toward the trees below, Silman points out that they are even farther down the mountain than they should be. For more than 5,000 years people have gathered firewood from this highest layer of vegetation and cleared the land for farming and grazing. The Inca, whose civilization flourished here from 600 to 500 years ago, were masters of terraced farming. Burning or harvesting trees is now prohibited in this national park, but enforcement on these isolated slopes is difficult. "We should be walking in forest," says Silman, as we follow the muddy paths surrounded by low bunch grasses.

The trail descends into forest—and clouds. In places I can barely see the path in front of me for the fog. Everything drips. At 6,000 feet of altitude, forests get up to 20 feet of moisture a year from rain. Water from clouds may add another 5 to 20 feet. The moss, ferns, bromeliads and orchids that cover the tree limbs strip moisture from the clouds and hold it, acting as a giant sponge. At the same time, trees extend roots directly from their branches into the epiphytes, to steal moisture and nutrients. The forest is a massive twisted tangle of roots, trees and epiphytes, what Silman calls "stuff on top of stuff." All of the water-swapping interactions among plants slow the flow of moisture as it makes its way downhill into the headwaters of the Amazon.

Scientists have described this type of forest as a nutrient-rich economy perched on a nutrient-poor substrate. The soils are acidic, cold and waterlogged. "It's a bad place to be a root," Silman says. As a result, he has found, most trees put on less than a millimeter of girth a year—about the thickness of a dime. That slow growth rate doesn't portend well for the ability of cloud forests to re-

Peru's cloud forests lie on the eastern slopes of the Andes, where they are bathed in moisture from the Amazon Basin. Looking east across the landscape from a ridge near Manú National Park, biologist Miles Silman says, "within our field of view are one out of every nine species of birds on the planet."

MICHAEL TENNESEN, *a writer and photographer based in Lomita, California, wrote about a 19th-century family of telescope builders in the October 2001 issue of* SMITHSONIAN.

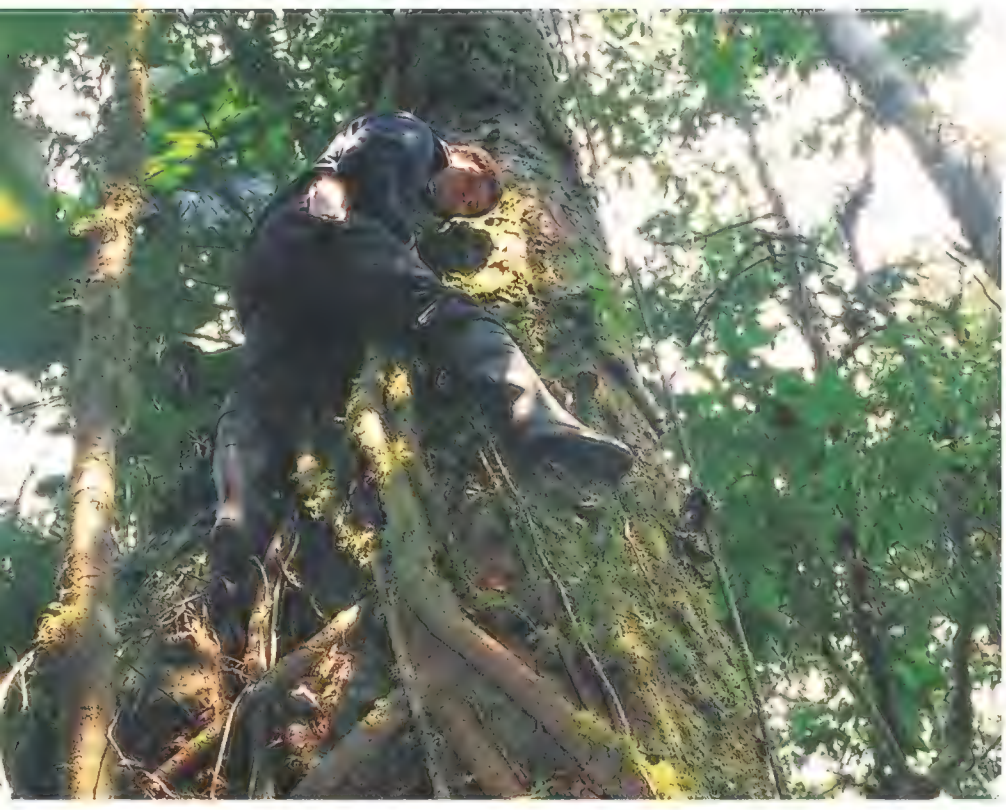
MIKE REAGAN

Life takes seemingly limitless forms in the tropical Andes. Clockwise from top left: Bats (a big-eared brown bat) pollinate night-blooming flowers. At least 30,000 kinds of plants (a *Tibouchina octopetala*) live here, about 10 percent of the world's total. Smithsonian scientist Alfred Gardner discovered this marsupial (a short-tailed mouse opossum). Orchids are abundant (a spider orchid), as are butterflies and moths (and their caterpillars). One genus in the blueberry family (Thibaudia) has about 60 species.

spond to rapidly changing climatic conditions, says Silman.

We trudge down the soggy trail. At one point it opens into a wide bog covered with deep sphagnum moss. Silman takes a detour in search of a new plant, but suddenly his leg disappears into a sinkhole. He pulls it out and backtracks to firmer ground. I stay on the trail. The biologists have their binoculars out frequently, to glimpse birds flitting by. Cloud forest is so dense that most wildlife encounters are brief. Still, the scientists spot mountain-tanagers, foliage-gleaners, spinetails and antpittas. The bird population goes up as we go down. The tropical Andes harbors 1,724 species of birds—more than double the number in Canada and the United States combined.

Josh Rapp, a forest canopy biologist at Wake Forest, is one of the daredevils of our group. He uses a slingshot to shoot a small lead weight attached to fishing line over a high limb. He uses the fishing line to haul up



Heavy loads of vines (a strangler fig gives biologist William Farfan a toehold while he collects leaf samples), epiphytes and assorted "stuff on top of stuff" can pull down cloud forest trees, which grow on steep slopes in wet soil. But many felled trees just send out new shoots from the forest floor.

stronger string, and the stronger string to haul up his climbing ropes. He secures the rope to a branch of the 120-foot-tall tree, dons his helmet and inches up the rope. "There's just so much more variety, multiple layers, and varied structures up there than you get in a temperate forest," he says. "And all this variety translates into some amazing habitats for epiphytes. There's big tank bromeliads shooting up red stocks with multiple yellow flowers, and big clusters of pink orchids. It's incredible." The epiphytes may be particularly susceptible to climate change if the cloud level rises.

William Farfan, a biologist from the University of Cuzco, brings me a small orchid not much bigger than his thumb. "Look at that," he beams. "Isn't she beautiful?" Indeed, the tiny purple, yellow and ivory blossom is dazzling. Karina Garcia, another biologist from the University of Cuzco, demonstrates her collecting prowess with a bunch of blossoms that trail to the ground like an enormous wild bridal bouquet. The Peruvians on our expedition compete with each other to capture the rarest and most elegant treasures from the forest; so far, she's ahead.

Collecting specimens may sound a bit old-fashioned, but paleoecologist Mark Bush of the Florida Institute of Technology, who studies the ancient history of these cloud forests, says scientists are still trying to pin down what lives here.

Work continues throughout the week. The biologists attach bands to trees to measure growth rates, collect specimens and stake out plots they will visit later to monitor changes in the forest in response to climate change. We are not without visitors. A troop of woolly monkeys swings through the canopy, hanging onto limbs that seem barely able to hold their weight, and leaping across chasms. One morning Silman spots a pair of prehensile-tailed porcupines in the canopy that he says are harder to find than jaguars in this part of the world.

Many animals here have evolved close relationships to specific types of plants. In the dense, relatively windless cloud forest, birds and insects do most of the pollinating. Sword-billed hummingbirds, with bills longer than their bodies, feed on flowers with long tubular blossoms. Sicklebill hummingbirds have shorter bills that have an almost 90 degree bend, allowing the bills to fit into similarly bent flowers of the genus *Heliconia*. "There are more than 200 species of hummingbirds in South America," says Cristián Samper, director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, "and every one of them has a story like that."

In previous trips, Silman and Bush have hauled in, by mule and backpack, pontoon platforms that they float on lakes in the cloud forest. They lower a hollow drill from a miniature derrick into lake bottoms to gather three-foot-long plugs of sediment. These core samples are sent to Bush's lab in Melbourne, Florida, for analysis. The distribution of pollen in the layers of sediment offers clues to how life in the region changed in response to the last ice age.

At Lake Consuelo, near the lower limit of the cloud forest, the researchers created a sedimentary record extending back 43,000 years. Comparing their data with different sediments analyzed by other scientists, Bush and Silman believe that during the last ice age, which lasted from about 105,000 to 11,000 years ago, when temperatures fell by 9 to 16 degrees Fahrenheit in this area, species moved down from the mountains into the Amazon Basin. "Basically, the tropical forests had a much more tolerable climate for allowing species to survive," says Bush. "The lack of enormous ice sheets moving across the land, as happened in North America, prevented the wholesale extinc-

tions that occurred in the north." As the earth began to warm up about 19,000 years ago, species moved back up into the Andes—but at a very slow pace.

Based on that picture of the past, Silman and Bush think that these slow-growing cloud forests may not be able to keep up with the rapid climate change predicted for this century. They and other scientists say plants won't be able to adapt fast enough to survive in their current ranges. Trees in particular may have to move to higher elevations in just one or two generations. But no one knows whether they will flourish upslope, where the land is steeper and the soils have different chemistry, depths and microbes.

"Plants are going to have to migrate on average 2,600 feet to remain in equilibrium with climate," says Silman. "That's a long way, and they have to get there by 2100." By then, according to most climate experts' predictions, the average temperature in the cloud forest will increase by four to seven degrees Fahrenheit.

Scientists have identified perhaps half of the plants that live in Peru's cloud forest (Karina Garcia with a mixed bouquet of study samples, above). Ferns and bamboo grow densely where ancient trails (walked by Josh Rapp, to the left of Miles Silman, above right) allow more light to penetrate the canopy.

Much of the information about the effect of changing climate on high-altitude forests doesn't come from the Andes, which have been relatively little studied, but from Costa Rica. There, in the Monteverde cloud forest, the dry seasons have become longer since the mid-1970s and have coincided with a number of local extinctions. Researchers recently tied the widespread extinctions of endemic frog and toad species in Monteverde to climate change. Warming in the next century is predicted to move the base of the cloud forest in that part of Costa Rica about 1,000 feet upward. If the movement continues, the clouds may rise above the crest of the Cordillera de Tilaran, and the cloud forest will cease to exist.

At camp, University of Cuzco biologists Mireya Raurau and Marlene Mamani press plant cuttings between sheets of newspaper. The pressing continues into the night. Much of the load will be shipped to specialists in Peru and herbariums around the world where botanists will attempt to tag known plant species and identify new ones. Silman has thus far found dozens of new plant species, a new genus of tree, and some major extensions of the ranges of known species.

The Peruvian researchers will stay here for a month. For our entire stay in the Callanga valley, I've been staring up wearily at a 9,100-foot ascent—the first stretch of the way back out. Rapp and Silman plan to do the entire hike, a distance of 30 miles, in a single day starting at 2 in the morning. I decide to leave a day earlier, on a more civilized schedule.

Silman arranges a mule and guides for my journey. Ten-year-old Tito and his 18-year-old sister-in-law Malta belong to a mule-driving family in Callanga. They hike this 30-mile trail for a living, taking the valley farmers' goods to market. Malta has a load over her shoulder, which I assume is clothes or food. Then the bundle begins to cry. On the way up, Malta nurses the baby, holding him in her left arm while whipping the mule with a stick held in her right hand. With all of us shouting, whipping and pushing, the mule goes only five to ten feet before it stops and we have to repeat the whole process. Our ascent travels the same upward path that the cloud forest may have to take.

Silman and Rapp, bleary-eyed, catch up with us the next day. Silman says hello, then collapses spread-eagle on the ground. After a brief rest, we resume our trek out of the cloud forest. On the hills above, a farmer is burning forest to make way for crops. Satellite photos taken over South America have shown 6,000 fires burning in tropical forests in a single night. "You can't stop them all," says Silman.

CORN PLASTIC TO THE RESCUE?

Wal-Mart and others are going green with "biodegradable" packaging made from corn. But is this really the answer to America's throwaway culture?

BY ELIZABETH ROYTE

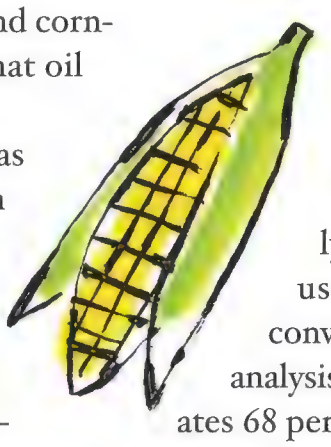
PORTRAITS BY BRIAN SMALE

THIRTY MINUTES north of Omaha, outside Blair, Nebraska, the aroma of steaming corn—damp and sweet—falls upon my car like a heavy curtain. The farmland rolls on, and the source of the smell remains a mystery until an enormous, steam-belching, gleaming-white architecture of tanks and pipes rises suddenly from the cornfields between Route 75 and the flood plain of the Missouri River. Behold NatureWorks: the largest lactic-acid plant in the world. Into one end of the complex goes corn; out the other come white pellets, an industrial resin poised to become—if you can believe all the hype—the future of plastic in a post-petroleum world.

The resin, known as polylactic acid (PLA), will be formed into containers and packaging for food and consumer goods. The trendy plastic has several things going for it. It's made from a renewable resource, which means it has a big leg up—both politically and environmentally—on conventional plastic packaging, which uses an estimated 200,000 barrels of oil a day in the United States. Also, PLA is in principle compostable, meaning that it will break down under certain conditions into harmless natural compounds. That could take pressure off the nation's mounting landfills, since plastics already take up 25 percent of dumps by volume. And corn-based plastics are starting to look cheap, now that oil prices are so high.

For a few years, natural foods purveyors such as Newman's Own Organics and Wild Oats have been quietly using some PLA products, but the material got its biggest boost when Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, announced this past October that it would sell some produce in PLA containers. The move is part of the company's effort to counter criticisms that it has been environmentally irresponsible. "Moving toward zero waste is one of our three big corporate goals for the environment," says Matt Kistler, vice president of private brands and product development for the retailer. Wal-Mart plans to use 114 million PLA containers a year, which company executives estimate will save 800,000 barrels of oil annually.

To make plastic packaging and containers from a renewable resource that can be returned to the earth as fertilizer sounds like an unmitigated good. Selling fruits and veggies in boxes that don't leach chemicals into landfills sounds equally wonderful. But PLA has considerable drawbacks that haven't been publicized, while some claims for its environmental virtues are downright misleading. It turns out there's no free lunch after all, regardless of what its container is made of, as I learned when I tried to get to the bottom of this marvelous news out of corn country.



Convenience *and* a salve to one's conscience? The corn-based polymer PLA (some NatureWorks containers) is increasingly popular because, unlike other plastics, it's not derived from petroleum. But is it in fact readily biodegradable?

ERIC HANSON; P. 84 RENEE COMET

AT THE NATUREWORKS PLANT in Blair, I don a hard hat, earplugs, gloves and protective eyewear and swear that I will snap no photographs. What can be revealed by my hosts is revealed: corn kernels are delivered and milled, dextrose is extracted from starch. Huge fermenters convert the dextrose into lactic acid, a simple organic chemical that is a by-product of fermentation (or respiration, in the case of the lactic acid that builds up in muscle tissue after intense activity). Industrial lactic acid is derived from many starchy sources, including wheat, beets and potatoes, but NatureWorks is owned by Cargill, the world's largest corn merchant, and so its lactic acid comes from corn. The compound is converted to lactide, and lactide molecules are linked into long chains or polymers: polylactic acid, PLA.

I did get a chance to see and touch the obscure object of my desire when some liquid PLA, with the color and shine of caramelized sugar, burst from a pipe and solidified in flossy strands on the steel-grated floor. The next time I saw the stuff, in a box in a warehouse, it had been crystallized into translucent white balls the size of peas: PLA resin. In the hands of fabricators, the pellets would be melted and reshaped into containers, films and fibers.

Though the polymer, because of its low melting point, doesn't yet have as many applications as does the far more common plastic polyethylene terephthalate (PET), used to make soda bottles and some polyester fibers, the company has plans, as a large banner in the office proclaims, to "Beat PET!" In some ways, corn plastic is clearly easier on the environment. Producing PLA uses 65 percent less energy than producing conventional plastics, according to an independent analysis commissioned by NatureWorks. It also generates 68 percent fewer greenhouse gases, and contains no toxins. "It has a drastically different safety profile," says NatureWorks operations manager Carey Buckles. "It's not going to blow up the community."

For retailers, PLA has a halo effect. Wild Oats was an early adopter of the stuff. "Our employees loved the environmental message of the containers, that they came from a renewable resource, and our customers had a strong reaction when we told them they were compostable," says Sonja Tuitele, a Wild Oats spokesperson. The containers initially boosted the company's deli sales by 17 percent, she says, and the chain now uses six million PLA containers a year. Newman's Own Organics uses PLA packaging for its salad mixes. "We felt strongly that everywhere we can get out of petroleum products, we should," says Newman's Own CEO Peter Meehan. "No one has ever gone to war over corn."

Wal-Mart, which has begun using PLA containers in some stores, has also switched packaging on high-end electronics from PET to a sandwich of cardboard and PLA. "It has a smaller packaging footprint, it's completely biodegradable and it costs less," says Kistler.

What Wal-Mart says about PLA's biodegradable nature is true, but there's an important catch.

CORN PLASTIC has been around for 20 years, but the polymer was too expensive for broad commercial applications until 1989, when Patrick Gruber, then a Cargill chemist looking for new ways to use corn, invented a way to make the polymer more efficiently. Working with his wife, also a chemist, he created his first prototype PLA products on his kitchen stove. In the beginning, it cost $200 to make a pound of PLA; now it's less than $1.

The polymer has had to get over some cultural hurdles. In the mid-1980s, another bio-based plastic appeared on grocery store shelves: bags made from polyethylene and cornstarch that were said to be biodegradable. "People thought they would disappear quickly," recalls Steven Mojo, executive director of the Biodegradable Products Institute. They didn't. Will Brinton, president of Woods End, a compost research laboratory in Mt. Vernon, Maine, says the bags broke into small fragments of polyethylene, fragments that weren't good for compost—or public relations. "It was a big step backward for the biodegradability movement," he adds. "Whole communities abandoned the concept of biodegradable bags as a fraud."

According to a biodegradability standard that Mojo helped develop, PLA is said to decompose into carbon dioxide and water in a "controlled composting environment" in fewer than 90 days. What's a controlled composting environment? Not your backyard bin, pit or tumbling barrel. It's a large facility where compost—essentially, plant scraps being digested by microbes into fertilizer—reaches 140 degrees for ten consecutive days. So, yes, as PLA advocates say, corn plastic is "biodegradable." But in reality very few consumers have access to the sort of composting facilities that can make that happen. NatureWorks has identified 113 such facilities nationwide—some handle industrial food-processing waste or yard trimmings, others are college or prison operations—but only about a quarter of them accept residential foodscraps collected by municipalities.

Moreover, PLA by the truckload may potentially pose a problem for some large-scale composters. Chris Choate, a composting expert at Norcal Waste Systems, headquartered in San Francisco, says large amounts of PLA can interfere with conventional composting because the polymer reverts into lactic acid, making the compost wetter and more acidic. "Microbes will consume the lactic acid, but they demand a lot of oxygen, and we're having trouble providing enough," he says. "Right now, PLA isn't a problem," because there's so little of it, Choate says. (NatureWorks disputes that idea, saying that PLA has no such effect on composting processes.) In any event, Norcal says a future PLA boom won't be a problem because the company hopes to convert its composters to so-called anaerobic digesters, which break down organic material in the absence of oxygen and capture the resulting methane for fuel.

Wild Oats accepts used PLA containers in half of its 80 stores. "We mix the PLA with produce and scraps from our juice bars and deliver it to an industrial composting facility," says the company's Tuitele. But at the Wild Oats stores that don't take back PLA, customers are on their own, and they can't be blamed if they feel deceived by PLA containers stamped "compostable." Brinton, who has done extensive testing of PLA, says such containers are "unchanged" after six months in a home composting operation. For that reason, he considers the Wild Oats stamp, and their in-store signage touting PLA's compostability, to be false advertising.

Wal-Mart's Kistler says the company isn't about to take back used PLA for composting. "We're not in the business of collecting garbage," he says. "How do we get states and municipalities to set up composting systems? That is the million-dollar question. It's not our role to tell government what to do. There is money to be made in the recycling business. As we develop packaging that can be recycled and composted, the industry will be developed."

For their part, recycling facilities have problems

"Renewable resource-based products can beat out petrochemical-based ones," says corn plastic pioneer Patrick Gruber (with his wife, Sally, in Colorado), who first cooked up PLA on his kitchen stove.

ELIZABETH ROYTE, *a resident of Brooklyn, is the author of* Garbage Land: On the Secret Trail of Trash. *Photographer* **BRIAN SMALE** *is based in Seattle.*

with PLA too. They worry that consumers will simply dump PLA in with their PET. To plastic processors, PLA in tiny amounts is merely a nuisance. But in large amounts it can be an expensive hassle. In the recycling business, soda bottles, milk jugs and the like are collected and baled by materials recovery facilities, or MRFs (pronounced "murfs"). The MRFs sell the material to processors, which break down the plastic into pellets or flakes, which are, in turn, made into new products, such as carpeting, fiberfill, or containers for detergent or motor oil. Because PLA and PET mix about as well as oil and water, recyclers consider PLA a contaminant. They have to pay to sort it out and pay again to dispose of it.

NatureWorks has given this problem some thought. "If the MRF separates the PLA, we'll buy it back from them when they've got enough to fill a truck," says spokeswoman Bridget Charon. The company will then either take the PLA to an industrial composter or haul it back to Blair, where the polymer will be broken down and remade into fresh PLA.

Despite PLA's potential as an environmentally friendly material, it seems clear that a great deal of corn packaging, probably the majority of it, will end up in landfills. And there's no evidence it will break down there any faster or more thoroughly than PET or any other form of plastic. Glenn Johnston, manager of global regulatory affairs for NatureWorks, says that a PLA container dumped in a landfill will last "as long as a PET bottle." No one knows for sure how long that is, but estimates range from 100 to 1,000 years.

Environmentalists have other objections to PLA. Lester Brown, president of the Earth Policy Institute, questions the morality of turning a foodstuff into packaging when so many people in the world are hungry. "Already we're converting 12 percent of the U.S. grain harvest to ethanol," he says. The USDA projects that figure will rise to 23 percent by 2014. "How much corn do we want to convert to nonfood products?" In addition, most of the corn that NatureWorks uses to make PLA resin is genetically modified to resist pests, and some environmentalists oppose the use of such crops, claiming they will contaminate conventional crops or disrupt local ecosystems. Other critics point to the

PLA made by NatureWorks (right, plant manager Carey Buckles in Blair, Nebraska) is compostable. But Chris Choate (below, at a Norcal site near Vacaville, California) says large amounts of corn plastic can interfere with composting.

steep environmental toll of industrially grown corn. The cultivation of corn uses more nitrogen fertilizer, more herbicides and more insecticides than any other U.S. crop; those practices contribute to soil erosion and water pollution when nitrogen runs off fields into streams and rivers.

NatureWorks, acknowledging some of those criticisms, points out that the corn it uses is low-grade animal feed not intended for human use. And it processes a small amount of non-genetically engineered corn for customers who request it. NatureWorks is also investigating better ways to segregate PLA in traditional recycling facilities, and it's even buying renewable energy certificates (investments in wind power) to offset its use of fossil fuels. But there's not much the company can do about the most fundamental question about corn plastic containers: Are they really necessary?

A FEW MILES SOUTH of Blair, in Fort Calhoun, Wilkinson Industries occupies a sprawling, low brick building in a residential neighborhood. Wilkinson converts NatureWorks resin into packaging. In a warehouse-size room, the pellets are melted, pressed into a thin film and stretched into sheets that a thermoformer stamps into rigid containers—square, tall, rectangular or round. (PLA can also take the shape of labels, electronics casings, wrap for flowers, gift cards, clothing fiber and pillow stuffing.) "We're shipping trays to Google's cafeteria and to [filmmaker] George Lucas' studio in San Francisco," says Joe Selzer, a Wilkinson vice president. "We do trays for Del Monte's and Meijer stores' fresh cut fruit. And, oh yeah, we do Wal-Mart."

Environmentalist and entrepreneur Eric Lombardi (in Boulder with corn-plastic cups) says PLA, though not perfect, is "visionary."

PLA amounts to about 20 percent of the plastic products made by Wilkinson. The rest is polystyrene and PET. "We'd like to see PLA be the resin of the future, but we know it never will be," says Selzer. "It's cost stable, but it can't go above 114 degrees. I've had people call me and say, 'Oh my god, I had my takeout box in my car in the sun and it melted into a pancake!' " Bridget Charon, sitting next to me, raises an eyebrow. Selzer continues. "Our number-one concern is PLA's competitive price, and then its applications. After that comes the feel-good."

Selzer leads us up a staircase to an interior room the size of a large pantry. It's crammed with samples of the 450 different containers fabricated by Wilkinson, which also stamps out aluminum trays. "Here's Kentucky Fried Chicken's potpie," Selzer says, pointing to a small round tin. "This plastic tray is for a wedding cake. This one's for crudités. This is for cut pineapple." (Wilkinson manufactured the original TV dinner tray, a sample of which resides in the Smithsonian Institution.) As I look around, I can't help thinking that almost all these products will be dumped, after just an hour or two of use, straight into a big hole in the ground.

MARTIN BOURQUE, executive director of the Berkeley Ecology Center, a nonprofit recycling organization, holds a dim view of PLA convenience packaging. "Yes, corn-based packaging is better than petroleum-based packaging for absolutely necessary plastics that aren't already successfully recycled, and for packaging that cannot be made of paper," he says. "But it's not as good as asking, 'Why are we using so many containers?' My worry is that PLA legitimizes single-serving, over-packaged products."

Many ecologists argue that companies should produce consumer goods that don't pollute the earth in their manufacture or disposal. In *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, the architect William McDonough writes about a future in which durable goods, like TVs and cars, are made from substances that cycle back into the manufacturing process, while packaging for short-lived products, like shampoo, will decompose back into the earth. NatureWorks says it wants to be part of that future. As the company's former CEO, Kathleen Bader, told *Forbes* magazine, "We're offering companies a chance to preempt embarrassing demands for responsible packaging. Brands that wait for legislative fiat will be left behind and exposed."

Eric Lombardi, president of the Grassroots Recycling Network and a leader in the international Zero Waste movement, takes a nuanced view of PLA's progress. He says it's "visionary" even to think about biologically based plastic instead of a petroleum-based one. True, he says, there are problems with PLA, "but let's not kill the good in pursuit of the perfect." He suggests that the difficulty disposing of PLA reflects a larger deficiency in how we handle trash. He's calling for a composting revolution. "We need a convenient, creative collection system with three bins: one for biodegradables, which we'll compost, one for recycling, and one for whatever's left."

Until such a system is in place, it's going to be hard to have cheap convenience packaging and feel good about its environmental effect—to have our takeout cake and eat it too. But the manufacture of PLA does save oil and generates far less air pollution. And we have to start somewhere.

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COWBOYS AND

GRIZZLIES in northwest Montana are being shot and possibly poisoned at an unprecedented pace since the bears were listed more than three decades ago as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The carcass count—22 killed in the past two years, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—worries biologists in charge of the grizzlies' otherwise successful comeback. Federal investigators have suspects in the killings but have filed no charges, and they have struggled to find local residents willing to help their investigations. Yet what is most revealing about this serial slaughter is what it says about the West's abiding inability to understand itself.

Permit me to explain.

The killing is taking place in and around the splendidly scenic Flathead Valley, where the chasm between facts and myths of life in the West continues to widen.

Flathead County—a gateway to Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness—has boomed over the past 15 years, with 39 percent population growth, rising incomes and falling unemployment. The county is emblematic of most of western Montana and the rest of the Rocky Mountain West, where a rapidly growing population is, on average, richer, better educated and more luxuriously housed than any previous generation. Retirement income, most of it belonging to newcomers, is the primary engine behind this economic transformation. For Montana as a whole, it amounts to about three times the combined income from farming, ranching, logging, and oil and gas exploration, according to Ray Rasker of Headwaters Economics, a nonprofit research group in Bozeman.

At the same time, jobs in logging are fading fast. In the Flathead, the disappearance of these physically demanding jobs—tied by history and myth to the very core of what it means to be a self-made Montanan—has coincided with the closure of roads in federal forests to protect grizzlies. Many longtime residents of the Flathead have been quick to link coincidence with causality. Fred Hodgeboom, president of Montanans for Multiple Use, a local group that wants more access to federal land, told federal game managers late last year that grizzly-driven resentment may well be behind the rising number of dead bears.

But if angry ex-loggers or ex-miners in northwest Montana are indeed killing grizzlies—and federal investigators, so far, say they have found no hard evidence of this—they are attacking a mainstay of the region's new recreation-based economy.

That economy has triggered explosive growth in the local housing industry, providing good jobs to blue-collar workers who in previous decades worked in the woods or the mines. Many of the palatial new homes built in the valley in the past two decades are high up in grizzly country. The bears, whose numbers have rebounded impressively over the past 30 years (recent poaching notwithstanding), are commercially crucial symbols for a landscape that is marketed as healthful and wild. The word "grizzly," as wrapped into company logos, letterheads and ad campaigns, helps business owners in the Flathead Valley sell everything from interior decoration to welding supplies. To manage what can be a dicey proximity of man and beast (grizzlies do occasionally attack and even eat people), the state of Montana employs a game warden in the area whose full-time job is to teach the rising number of people and grizzlies how to get along.

Like many Westerners, Montanans tend not to understand themselves, their landscape or their politics—at least not from an economic point of view.

"They look in a rearview mirror," says Thomas Power, chairman of the economics department at the University of Montana in Missoula. "Views of the economy are tied to what people learned from their parents and their grandparents. It even affects the new population. Those folks buy into an imagined fantasy of what life in Big Sky Country is all about. That fantasy is part of their reason for living in the West."

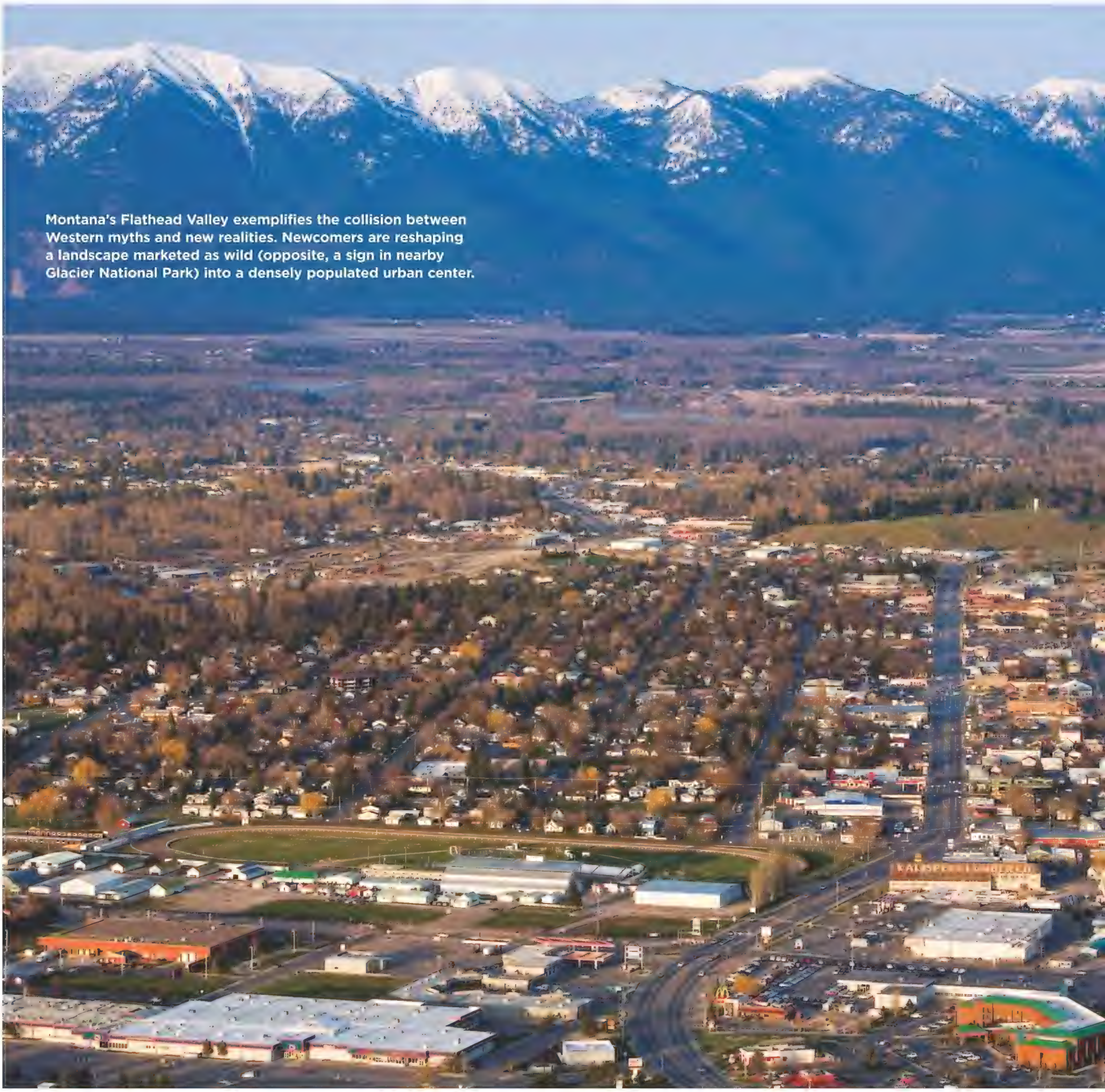
Brian Schweitzer, a mint farmer who in 2004 was elected Montana's first Democratic governor in 16 years, told me that Western politicians have to pay careful attention to the disconnect between economic reality and the fantasies floating around inside the heads of voters, especially male voters. He said that two statewide elections (he lost a race in 2000 against Republican Senator Conrad Burns) taught him the im-

CARL & ANN PURCELL / CORBIS; P. 91 CHUCK HANEY

REALTORS

The mythical West lives on—even as the wealthy, the leisured and the retired buy into Big Sky Country. An essay

BY BLAINE HARDEN



Montana's Flathead Valley exemplifies the collision between Western myths and new realities. Newcomers are reshaping a landscape marketed as wild (opposite, a sign in nearby Glacier National Park) into a densely populated urban center.

portance of those fantasies, even while reaching beyond them.

In his second, successful race, Schweitzer did most of his TV campaign ads sitting on a horse or holding a gun or both. He did it, he said, so his "visuals" would show that he understands Montana. "Hell, I can be on a horse and talk about health care," he said. What a Western politician cannot do, if he or she wants to get elected, is scold voters about the gap that exists between their imagined West and the place where they actually live. "Look," Schweitzer told me, "if I stand in front of voters and tell them, 'Everything you thought you knew about Montana's economy is wrong,' then who in the hell is going to vote for someone like that?"

HISTORIAN RICHARD WHITE has written that the West is the most powerfully imagined part of the United States. And the American imagination has a chronic history of getting things wrong when it comes to understanding the character of Western land.

An example of how wrong that understanding can be occurred in eastern Montana between 1910 and 1918. More than 100,000 sodbusters (including my great-grandfather Elvin Eldorado Harden) were lured to free federal land by railroad advertisements and their own romantic notions of Manifest Destiny. To these newly arriving farmers, the east side of Montana looked like a good place to settle—until plows stripped away the prairie grass to reveal gumbo and alkali soil. After a few years of freakishly adequate rains greened freshly cultivated acres, annual rainfall on the Northern Plains returned to normal, which proved chronically insufficient for row crops. Hunger quickly trumped imagination as crops failed and livestock starved. My great-grandfather died of a bowel obstruction on his struggling homestead, and his seven sons and two daughters scattered. Eastern Montana—like other parts of the Northern Plains—has been losing population ever since.

The land itself engenders wrongheadedness about the West. It looks endless and inviting. The West excites the eye with a "hard clarity" and stirs up notions of "unlimited opportunity," wrote Wallace Stegner, who spent much of his life examining the fool's gold of mythology that is to be found west of the 100th meridian, where, Stegner wrote, "aridity, and aridity alone, make the various Wests one."

Fertile open space without end is an optical and metaphysical illusion that resonates throughout popular culture. It famously infected Cole Porter, a Western romantic from Indiana who composed for Broadway. He was the one who wrote:

Oh, give me land, lots of land under starry skies above,
Don't fence me in. . . .
I want to ride to the ridge where the West commences
Gaze at the moon till I lose my senses
Can't look at hobbles and I can't stand fences
Don't fence me in.

"Don't Fence Me In" by Cole Porter © 1944 (renewed) Warner Bros. Inc.

Sadly, mountains, extensive federal ownership and—above all—a chronic lack of water make much of the land under starry skies uninhabitable. Census figures show that the West is the most rural part of the country, in terms of land use, but it is by far the most densely urban, in terms of where people live. Los Angeles is growing denser each year, as newly urbanized land is occupied by about nine people per acre, nearly four times the density of newly developed land in New York.

And so it goes across the entire West, with San Diego denser than Philadelphia, Las Vegas more tightly packed than Chicago, Denver more crowded than Detroit. Twelve of the country's 15 most densely populated urban areas are in the West. New residents move to land in these cities at triple the per-acre density of any other part of the country. In Charlotte or Atlanta or Nashville, high-end houses typically come with several acres; in San Francisco, Portland and Phoenix, expensive new houses tend to be built within feet of one another.

These facts have been widely studied, written about and discussed at conferences by federal and university demographers. But they have done little to rattle the mythology of the West. "There is no denying that these density patterns don't fit with common perception," says Marc Perry, chief of the population distribution branch at the Census.

The grand master of winning votes by milking the myth was Ronald Reagan. As a candidate for governor of California, he took Western images of rugged individualism and, as historian White has written, married them to "the resentment and feelings of victimization" that Western whites felt toward teeming cities full of blacks, Hispanics, gays, criminals and liberals. Reagan's mythmaking was so universally appealing (it is not just Westerners who are hoodwinked by myths) that it helped lift him to two terms as president.

Over time, of course, reality has a nasty way of asserting itself. Just as the starry-eyed sodbusters of my great-grandfather's generation were forced to give up on eastern Montana, so have voters in Western states been compelled by pollution, congestion and assorted urban ills to acknowledge a few facts of life. In California, Washington and Oregon they regularly elect politicians who promise to clean up the air, unclog the highways and regulate big business—and who don't have to sit on a horse while doing so.

But in Montana and elsewhere in the Rocky Mountain West, mythology still calls a lot of shots.

Consider those federally protected grizzlies in the Flathead Valley, dying in a cultural warp zone, apparent victims of Montanans who cannot square the rise of a prosperous new economy with the fall of a lifestyle sanctified by stirring stories of self-reliance. Federal investigators told me that whoever has been killing the bears is probably known to his neighbors, probably even *brags* to his neighbors. But those neighbors, investigators say, are not talking. It is not the way of the West.

BLAINE HARDEN, *a Seattle-based reporter for the* Washington Post, *wrote* A River Lost: The Life and Death of the Columbia.

The Triangle blaze killed 146 (relatives line up to identify the dead at a makeshift morgue).

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Trial by Fire

Vital records were missing—and would have stayed missing were it not for a dead lawyer's vanity

BY DAVID VON DREHLE

ON MARCH 25, 1911, a pleasant springtime afternoon, a fire broke out in a garment factory near Washington Square in New York City's Greenwich Village. Within minutes, the entire eighth floor of the ten-story tower was full of flames. Onlookers, drawn by the column of smoke and the clamor of converging fire wagons, watched helplessly and in horror as dozens of workers screamed from the ninth-floor windows. They were trapped by flames, a collapsed fire escape and a locked door. Firefighters frantically cranked a rescue ladder, which rose slowly skyward—then stopped at the sixth floor, fully extended. Pressed by the advancing blaze, workers began leaping and tumbling to their deaths on the sidewalk. Other workers perished in the flames, still others plunged into an open elevator shaft, while behind the factory two dozen fell from the flimsy fire escape. In all, 146 workers, most of them immigrant young women and girls, perished in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. For 90 years it stood as New York's deadliest workplace disaster.

This story—and the fire's impact on the politics of New York and the nation—took hold of me in the early 1990s. I had moved to the Village as a reporter for the *Miami Herald*, and one day, while exploring the neighborhood, I was surprised to find the factory tower still standing at the corner of Washington Place and Greene Street. In the years that followed, I often passed that corner and always paused to look up at those ninth-floor windows.

My curiosity led me to a spare and forceful book, *The Triangle Fire*. Written by a labor organizer named Leon Stein and published in 1962, the book was both harrowing and somewhat frustrating. Stein had interviewed dozens of survivors, tracked down a number of original records and ren-

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dered the story in taut prose. But many of the questions that most interested me were taken for granted by Stein, who spent his career in the New York garment industry, a world stamped by the Triangle tragedy. I was hungry for more about the context and characters surrounding this event, which influenced such momentous figures as the progressive New York governor Alfred E. Smith, the New Deal architect Senator Robert F. Wagner and the pioneering Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins. But no full-length study of the fire and its impact on politics had been written in the decades after Stein's book.

So I proposed to write my own.

How rash! But my folly dawned on me slowly—and only after I had blown a substantial stack of my publisher's advance on diapers, formula and preschool tuition. I discovered that virtually all the key documents concerning the Triangle fire had been lost or destroyed. Records of the fire marshal's investigation: long gone. Files of the coroner's special jury: vanished.

Worst of all, I couldn't find the official transcript of the trial of Isaac Harris and Max Blanck, the Triangle factory owners, who had been charged with manslaughter on the theory that their negligence caused the workers' deaths. Their three-week trial in December 1911 collected sworn testimony from more than 150 witnesses who were questioned while details of the disaster were still relatively fresh in their minds. Dozens of survivors, including Harris and Blanck themselves, recounted their narrow escapes, while firefighters, police officers and building engineers added details of the factory layout and the fire's awful progress. No other document could take me closer to that factory in the moments before and after the fire erupted.

I knew that a transcript had been prepared, because Stein had used it in his research: his notes were part of the labor history archive at the Kheel Center at Cornell University. Yet when I contacted the New York City archives, I was told that, well, the transcript—all 2,000-plus pages—seemed to have been lost. It apparently vanished, wouldn't you know,

during a project to preserve historic documents. Sometime around 1970, an archives official explained, New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice received a grant to transfer important court records to microfilm. Somewhere between the courthouse and the college, the Triangle record was lost forever.

Still, I figured there must be other copies, prepared for the prosecutor or the defense attorney. I inquired at other New York colleges and universities, at the New York Public Library, at various city museums and state archives. Coming up empty, I turned to the multitude of daily newspapers from 1911. Surely the sensational trial of Harris and Blanck must have been covered extensively, in front-page stories full of colorful details and verbatim testimony.

Nope. My heart sank as I fed rolls of microfilm into reading machines at the Library of Congress (having moved to Washington as a reporter for the *Washington Post*). There was next to nothing in the *New York World*, the *American*, the *Herald*, the *Times*, the *Tribune*, the *Post*. Only the most dramatic testimony and the verdict—not guilty—registered more than a few paragraphs stashed in the back pages.

The factory became "a mass of traveling fire" in 15 minutes; the tragedy led to a series of reforms.

BETTMANN / CORBIS

My frustration turned to panic. Samuel Johnson famously declared that "no man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money," and I have never been wealthy enough to test his theory. The money I had taken was now gone, even as the bills continued to arrive. I began to lose hope that I could actually make a book from the scraps and remnants I had been compiling.

Which was sad, because some of the scraps were fascinating. Virtually noth-

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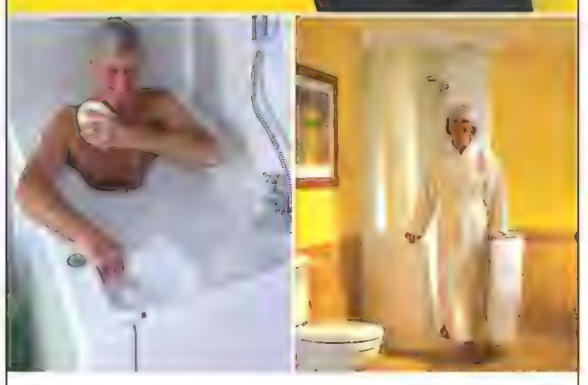

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ing had been known about the young women who worked and died in the Triangle factory, but I was finding whispers of their brief stories in old census records and city maps. The microfilmed record of a Socialist newspaper in New York, the *Call*, contained a haunting half page of photographs of Triangle fire victims, lent by their grieving families. The same newspaper fleshed out Harris and Blanck's role in resisting efforts to unionize the garment factories.

Such discoveries kept me plodding along, despite flagging hopes. One spring day in 2001, almost exactly 90 years after the fire, I turned my attention at the Library of Congress to the high-priced attorney Harris and Blanck hired to save them from prison. Max D. Steuer was among the most colorful figures in the peacock gallery of New York before World War I. An immigrant and former sweatshop worker, Steuer rose to the pinnacle of the New York bar, starring as courtroom magician in dramas ranging from celebrity sex scandals to securities frauds to the disputed wills of dysfunctional dynasties. He became known as "Million-Dollar Steuer" in the Hearst newspapers until he complained about it to one of his clients: William Randolph Hearst. The Triangle trial—specifically, Steuer's cunning cross-examination of the star prosecution witness—was a key moment in his legendary career.

I found a sketch of Steuer's life in the Dictionary of American Biography, published in the early 1960s. The entry ended with a list of sources printed in tiny type. One note caught my eye: "Collections of the records and briefs of cases in which Steuer appeared are in the N.Y. County Lawyers' Assoc." What records?

I looked up the NYCLA on the Internet and was pleased to find that it still existed. It had been founded early in the 20th century as an alternative to the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, which—in those days—was not open to women, blacks or Jews like Steuer. A few calls led me to Ralph Monaco, director of the NYCLA library,

Attorney Max D. Steuer kept trophies of his victories in the form of bound trial transcripts.

BETTMANN / CORBIS

who seemed genuinely interested in my saga—and genuinely sorry to tell me he had no idea what records the Dictionary was talking about.

That was the low point.

Three days later, Monaco called back. He had posted a listserv message explaining my plight to the Law Librarians Association of Greater New York. One of his predecessors as director of the NYCLA library, Alison Alifano, saw the message and replied that a collection of Steuer's records was somewhere in the library. She just was not sure where. Then a veteran library employee named Jose Rosario unearthed what appeared to be a transcript from the stacks.

I told Monaco I could be in New York the next day.

How about next week? he countered. Promptly at 9 the next Monday morning, I entered NYCLA's downtown headquarters, an elegant Cass Gilbert landmark in the twin shadows of the World Trade Center towers. On Monaco's desk, I finally laid eyes on my prize: two fat, antique, leather-bound tomes, labeled Vol. 1 and Vol. 3. Vol. 2 appeared to be missing, so Rosario and I went back to the stacks to hunt for it. He led me to a shelf of similar books, all from Steuer's estate. Scanning the spines, I realized that he had commemorated his greatest trial victories by binding his carbon-copy transcripts in gold-lettered leather. Upon his death in 1940, he bequeathed these trophies to NYCLA. And as his fame had faded with the passing decades, they were relegated to storage and forgotten.

We never found the missing volume, but that hardly dampened my excitement as I turned the first of more than 1,300 pages of recovered history. For much of the next two weeks, I read slowly through the sometimes tangled testimony and typed thousands of words of notes and quotations into my laptop. Photocopying the volumes was out of the question—the cheap paper, nearly a century old, was crumbling between my fingers. In fact, I began to worry that Monaco would call a halt to my reading because the books were falling apart. So I sat at a table as far from the reference desk as I could get, and swept small drifts of paper crumbs into my briefcase to hide them.

Each morning, however, Monaco and his colleagues welcomed me back. And gradually I learned not only what it was like to endure the fire but also what it was like to work at the Triangle Waist Co. Notorious today as a classic sweatshop, the Triangle was a model of modern efficiency to its owners and employees. Indeed, as I came to understand the factory, the pace of daily work and the intricate relationships inside the large, family-run business, I could see how the factory's scale and efficiency helped cause the tragedy. Specially designed bins held hundreds of pounds of scrap cotton and tissue paper at a time. In one of these bins, just before the quitting bell rang, a fire kindled. The supply of fuel turned the factory into what a fire captain called "a mass of traveling fire" within 15 minutes.

Some testimony was spellbinding, such as factory foreman Samuel Bernstein's marathon account of his efforts to fight the fire and save the workers. Capt. Howard Ruch of the New York Fire Department told of his initial survey of the charred ninth floor. "I stepped on something that was soft," he said, and only then realized he had reached a pile of bodies. Line by line, the transcript restored history to three dimensions and

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provided a Rosetta stone for understanding Leon Stein's notes from the lost volume of testimony.

Through the cooperation of NYCLA and Cornell, my experience of reading the lost transcripts is now available to anyone with an Internet connection. In 2004, Kheel Center director Richard Strassberg carried the Steuer volumes to the Ithaca campus, where each page was scanned and digitized. Because the quality of the originals was so poor, the process captured only about 40 percent of the text. So Patricia Leary of the Kheel Center painstakingly corrected every page.

Last autumn, after more than a year of effort, the Kheel Center posted the entire text on its Triangle fire Web site: ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire. The site, which receives some six million visitors each year, is a model for archivists who want to make their records available to students and researchers. By June, portions of the recovered record had been downloaded more than 1,100 times, Strassberg reports, including nearly 400 complete copies.

The Triangle fire catalyzed reforms in New York that spread nationwide—outward-swinging exit doors and sprinklers in high-rise buildings, for example. These reforms in turn fueled the careers of people like Smith and Wagner and Perkins, the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet. Half a century after the fire, she still pointed to that day as the birth of the New Deal. Today, the memory of the fire moves reformers to wonder why some workers in the United States—and many more abroad—still toil in needlessly dangerous conditions.

Those who experienced the horror firsthand could not have anticipated the impact. Nor could they have imagined that, someday—thanks to a lawyer's vanity, a buried footnote, a diligent librarian and the power of technology—their long-silent voices could speak directly of their experiences to readers around the world.

DAVID VON DREHLE *wrote* Triangle: The Fire That Changed America.

LETTERS

{ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11 }

ed as a kind of divine being, and that is what I had in mind. But that was an abuse of piety, rightly rejected in recent years as "Maryolatry." I would have served readers better had I indicated as much.

The objection that my article is overfocused on sexuality might more properly be addressed to the tradition which is the article's subject—the portrait of Mary Magdalene as a repentant whore. And I welcome the complaint that I disrespect my own Catholic Church by describing it as treating women as inferior as an opportunity to call, again, for the admission of women to the priesthood.

I WANT TO COMMEND James Carroll for his brilliant article on Mary of Magdala. His methodology and insights are a welcome relief to the thoughtless fundamentalism that seems so pervasive. He might also have mentioned the role that church fathers had in the development of nascent misogyny in the church even before Gregory the Great. Augustine of Hippo and Tertullian, for example, had harsh words for human sexuality and the authority of women—and, implicitly, for Mary as an apostolic messenger. Origen was scathing in his attack on Gnostic gospels, but he based his attack on their overt Neoplatonism and the notion of "secret knowledge" available only to a few. All in all, it is not a pretty history.

LAWRENCE MOHR, M. DIV.
WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

PAYING NO MIND

HERE IS THE IRONY: long after Andrew Wyeth's critics are gone and forgotten, his paintings will continue speaking to people for generations to come ("Wyeth's World"). It's a blessing that he doesn't listen to his detractors.

ROBERT REYNOLDS
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA

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I DID NOT SAY that the importation of Asian elephants needs to stop

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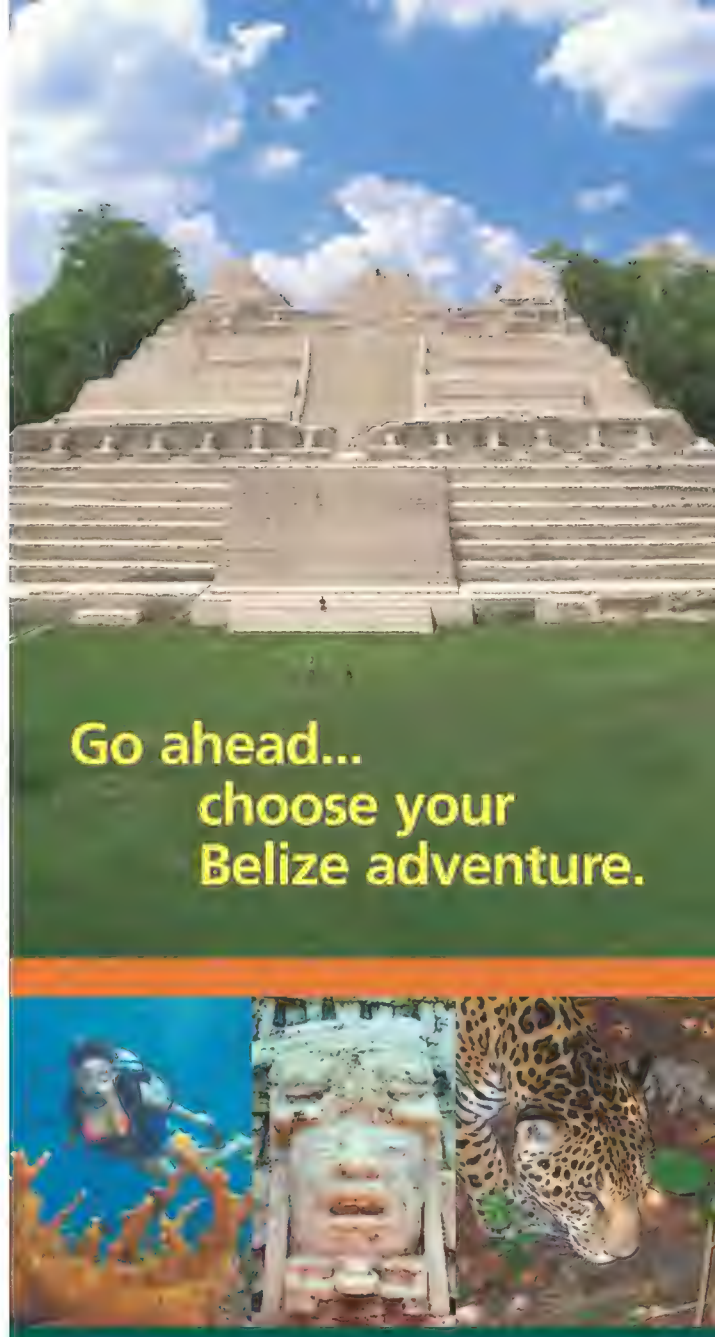
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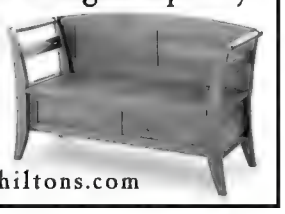

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("Trunk Shows," "Around the Mall," July). What I said was that elephant "death rates are higher than the birth rates, and we have to change that in order to stop importing elephants from Asia—we don't want to reduce the wild population even further."

There are approximately 30,000 wild Asian elephants left in their native range and about 15,000 Asian elephants that "work" in the logging, religious and tourist industries in Asia. There are less data about this critically endangered species than there are about the similar, but much less endangered, African savanna elephant.

Maintaining a healthy, genetically diverse Asian elephant zoo population is important not only to help secure the survival of the species but also to study Asian elephant behavior, physiology and biology and to train future generations of elephant researchers.

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JANINE BROWN, PH.D.
SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL ZOO CONSERVATION AND RESEARCH CENTER
FRONT ROYAL, VIRGINIA

Brown's quote was indeed abridged, in a caption. We regret the error. —Ed.

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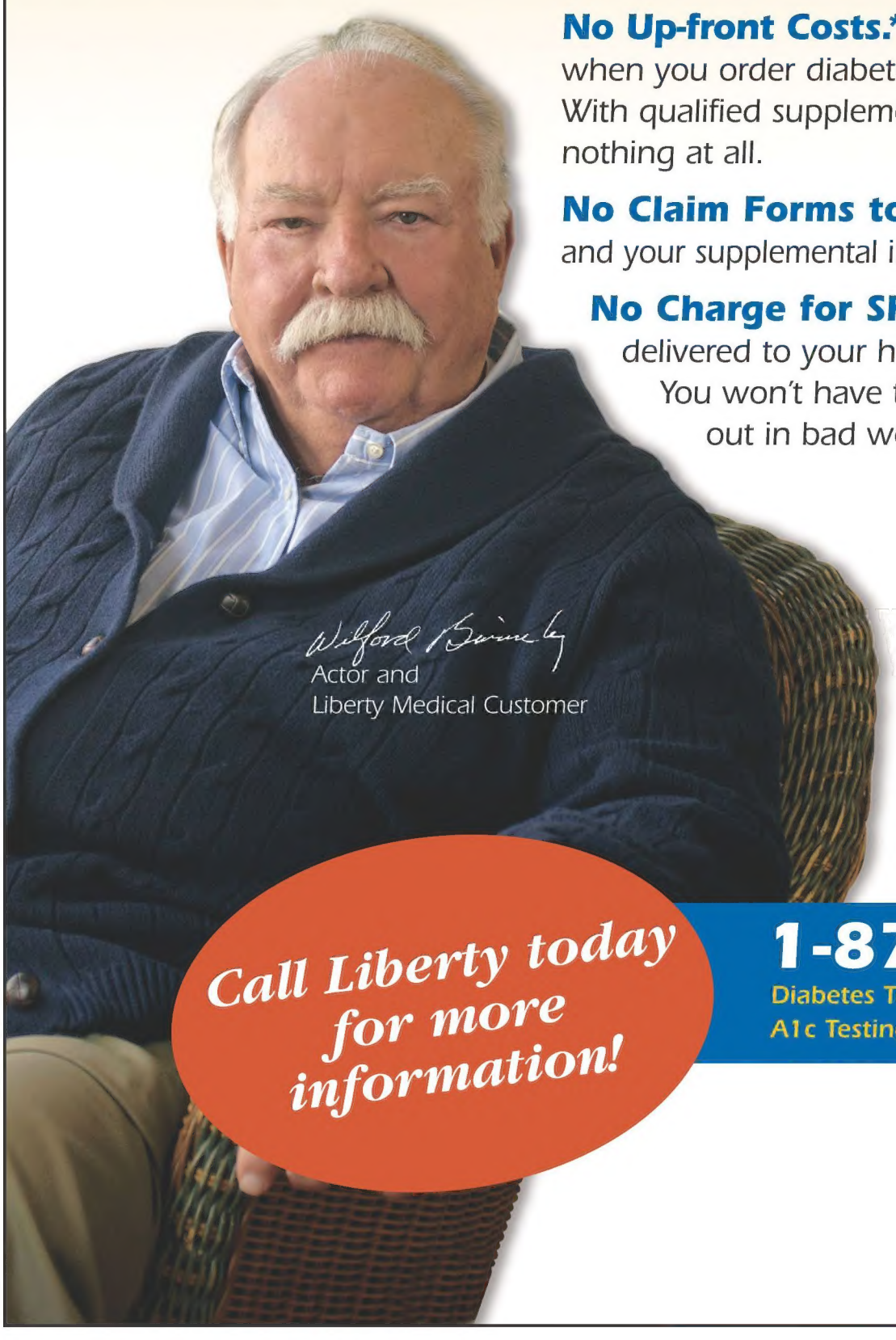

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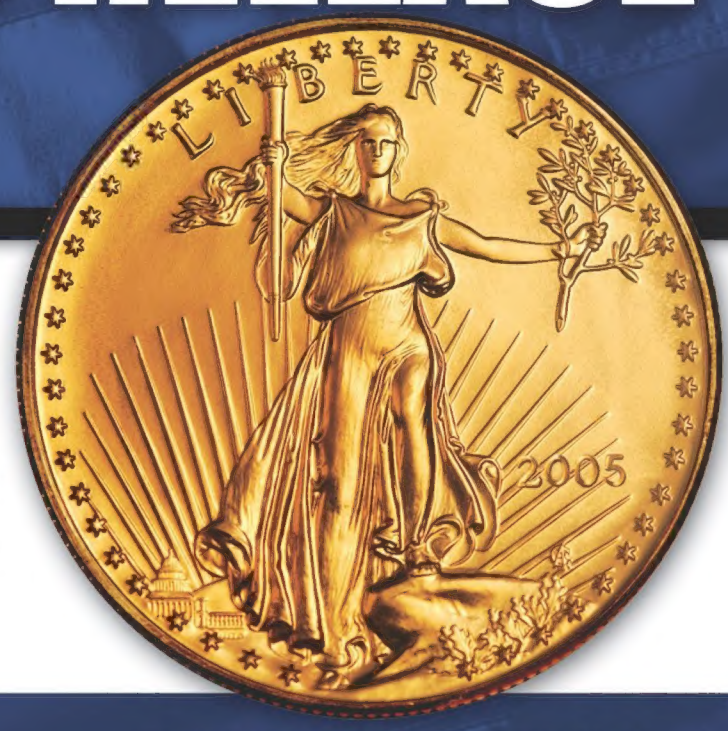

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Weight of the World

The battle of the bulge goes global **BY NIRANJANA IYER**

LIKE SEVERAL MILLION PEOPLE on this planet, I weigh 15 pounds more than I'd like. But my 15 pounds appeared overnight, after an airplane ride from my home in India to Boston.

As a child in Chennai, I was considered worryingly thin. My mother sluiced an appetite stimulant down my throat at dinnertime and force-fed me cod-liver oil once a week—to no avail. As I grew into a slim teen, Ma would point to my collarbones as evidence that I was wasting away, but I was unmoved. If my figure didn't quite match the voluptuous Bollywood heroine standard, well, my *salwar kameezes* (flowing tunics worn over drawstring pants) fit me fine. Rare was the woman who wore pants in Chennai, which was far too hot for anything but the lightest and loosest of clothing.

Then I moved to New Hampshire for graduate school and began a life in denim.

The body that I had considered normal was now revealed to be anything but. My jeans showed no mercy; every untoned millimeter of my belly hung over my waistband like an overbite in search of an orthodontist. Pants widened my hips, shrank my legs and made my waist disappear. In India, I'd been above average in height. In the States, I was short (so said the Gap). From a tall, thin Women's, I had morphed into a petite, plump Misses'—without gaining or losing a smidgen of flesh.

There ought to be a dictionary entry for those who enter the Western world to find that their bodies are thin no more. My vote goes to "slimmigrant"—for an immigrant who discovers that he or she needs to shed a dozen pounds to be considered unfat.

My quest for *asslimilation* began with a whimper. I forswore mayonnaise, peanut butter, cheesecake and tortilla chips—delicacies I'd never sampled before coming to America. I stopped going to those $9.99 Indian buffets with their unlimited helpings of butter chicken. For the first time in my life, I visited a gym, where my whimpers became shrieks of pain.

My extra poundage, however, was like a cockroach; it might disappear for a while, but it could never be eradicated. Potluck lunches, Thanksgiving dinners and snow days made sure of that.

Two years ago, on my 30th birthday, I resolved to remain plump forever rather than go on another diet. And to escape my new homeland, which considered me overweight, I resolved to take a holiday in Chennai, where salesgirls would hint that garments would drape better if only I were wider, my aunt would insist that I was scrawny and my mother would feed me restorative spoonfuls of clarified butter. I booked my plane tickets.

Slimmigrants, beware!

Satellite television and globalization had changed the city I grew up in: in the five years I'd been away, skim milk had replaced the heavy cream of middle-class India, and those cushiony Bollywood heroines had been supplanted by supermodels whose hipbones could shred lettuce. It seemed that every girl in Chennai was wearing trousers (and the girls' waists seemed no bigger round than a CD). The neighborhood video-rental store had become a fitness center. Even my aunt had bought a stationary bike (which she rode very competently in her sari).

My mother said she was glad to see me looking so nice and healthy. Time to go on a diet, I realized. I opted for the Mediterranean one—I *love* pizza.

RICHARD THOMPSON